Our War Paint is Writer's Ink:
Ojibwe Literary Transnationalism

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ABSTRACT

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Works of literature written by Native Americans have long been treated by readers and critics as expressions of cultural identity: transparent representations of communal world-views, traditional belief-systems, or sets of cultural practices. Often, such ethnographic readings come at the expense of understanding how these texts express the political concerns of their authors. My dissertation pushes back against such readings, showing how Ojibwe writers attempt to use literature as a means of shaping public opinion in the pursuit of pragmatic political goals. Reconsidering Ojibwe writing in this way, I examine how Ojibwe authors use their work to engage in dialog with non-Native readers and writers in the U.S.—an interaction they insist be understood as transnational. By comparing literary representations of the Ojibwe produced by both U.S. writers and the Ojibwe themselves, I show how poems, novels, and dramatic works have been the site at which the possibility of Ojibwe nationhood has been imagined and contested for nearly two centuries. In so doing, I suggest that Ojibwe literature is not a stable and homogenous category, but an expedient response to U.S. settler-colonialism defined by a shared set of political commitments. In so doing, I complicate prior theorizations of indigenous literary nationalism as a project primarily oriented toward cultural separatism, replacing them with a more nuanced model of continual, if agonistic, engagement on the imperfectly leveling field of literary representation.

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Acknowledgments

Miigwech was the very first Ojibwe word I ever learned because it is the most important. There are many, many people to whom I must say miigwech—thank you.

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This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of Karl Kroeber, a true mentor whose kindness and encouragement changed my life forever. 'Chi miigwech.

Introduction

The word [Ojibwe] is very loaded and bears a host of meanings and interpretations and theories. I've heard that Ojibwe refers to the puckering of the seams traditional moccasins, or makazinan. Or that the Ojibwe roasted their enemies "until they puckered up." Gruesome. I've heard that Anishinaabe means "from whence is lowered the male of the species," but I don't like that one very much. And then there is the more mystical Spontaneous Beings. The meaning that I like best of course is Ojibwe from the verb Ozhibii'ige, which is "to write."

—Louise Erdrich

…the Ojibwa have received a vicarious distinction, unique among aboriginal American tribal groups. They have achieved an enduring fame, not through wars or conquests…but through the projection of an artistic image of them that has become an integral part of American literary tradition.

—Alfred Irving Hallowell

…the Ojibwe language has given English the words "moccasin," "toboggan," "wigwam," "moose," "totem," and "muskeg." We've even met on the middle ground. We provided "musk" from "mashkiig," or swamp, English provided "rat" and together we built a word for a swamp dwelling rodent that looks an awful lot like a rat—muskrat. If that's not a fine example of cultural exchange I don't know what is.

—David Treuer

Writing has been part of Ojibwe[1] life for centuries. Long before contact with Euroamericans, Ojibwe wrote on birchbark scrolls, not with words, but pictures. With characteristic flowing lines the images on such scrolls served various purposes, detailing instructions for religious rituals, or depicting legends from the oral tradition. Sometimes the scrolls were used to record one of the foundational stories of the Ojibwe people: their

1 Although it is common practice for Ojibwe academics to exclusively use the endonym Anishinaabeg to refer to the Ojibwe people, I will not be doing so for the purposes of this dissertation. Because Anishinaabeg refers not just to the Ojibwe, but to the Odawa and Potawatomi as well (indeed, in the Ojibwe language it can actually refer to any indigenous person), for the purposes of clarity and accuracy I find it easier to use the more specific term Ojibwe.

great migration. The Ojibwe once lived on the east coast of North America, probably somewhere near present-day Maine. At some point in the last millennia, the Ojibwe were visited by a series of otherworldly prophets, who encouraged them to migrate west to a place where food grew on water. They spent the next several centuries making their way up the Saint Lawrence River and the waters that fed it. They were guided on their journey by a great miigis—a cowrie shell—that had risen from the ocean. After many years of traveling, the Ojibwe finally came upon the rich lakes and streams of the Great Lakes region. There the prophecy that had compelled the Ojibwe to move was fulfilled. The silty streambeds and lake shores of the region were rich in manoomin—the wild rice that continues to be an important source of physical, spiritual, and economic sustenance for the Ojibwe people.

Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Ojibwe consolidated control over the Great Lakes region through diplomacy, trade, and warfare. Together with the Odawa and the Potowatomi, they formed a powerful alliance, known as the Three Fires Confederacy. This alliance allowed these related tribes to defend their territory from the Haudenosaunee and control trade among other Algonquin language speaking tribes of the eastern Great Lakes region. According to the nineteenth century Ojibwe historian William Warren (1825-53), the Ojibwe kept a detailed record of this period, incising important events on a plate of native copper. Warren estimated that the copper plate accounted for about three centuries of Ojibwe history going back to the sixteenth century, measured by the lifespan of nine previous custodians of the plate, each of whom had made a mark on the copper. Next to one of these marks, claimed Warren, was the record of an portentious event for the Ojibwe: “By the rude figure of a man with a hat on his

head, placed oppsite one of these indentations, was denoted the period when the white race made his first appearance among them."[2] These were Jesuit missionaries, whose eagerly waved crucifixes earned them the name 'wemitigoozhi'—*the stick shakers*—the name which the French still bear in the Ojibwe language.

These holy men were soon followed by those with decidedly more secular interests. The Ojibwe established close economic relationships (and oftentimes kin relationships) with the French *voyageurs* and *coereur des bois* with whom they traded food and pelts—mostly beaver—for cookware, fabric, steel tools, and other European-made goods. One of the most important acquisitions the Ojibwe made through this trade was the firearm. Using this newly-acquired technology, the Ojibwe engaged in a war of expansion against the Dakota, pushing them out of fur-rich areas of modern-day Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Manitoba. By the end of the 18th century, the Ojibwe had established themselves as a major regional power, controlling a huge portion of the North American continent.

In the early nineteenth century the Ojibwe began their first formal interactions with the United States, which had acquired a large portion of the Ojibwes' territory as a result of the 1783 Treaty of Paris. While initial relations were cool (a few Ojibwe bands joined Tecumseh and the British against the Americans in the War of 1812), the Ojibwe soon established a treaty-based alliance with the US, just as they had with the British and French before. This process was aided by a woman named Obabaamwewe-giizhigokwe, or Jane Johnston (1800-42), the daughter of an aristocratic Irish fur trader and an Ojibwe

2 Warren, William Whipple. *History of the Ojibway People* (Second Edition). Minnesota Historical Society Press. 2009. pp. 53-4.

storyteller. Mixing her mother's love for the legends of her people with her father's love of literature, Jane would produce romantic translations of Ojibwe stories as well as lyric poems recounting the heroic deeds of her ancestors—the first poetry ever published by a Native person. Through her writings, Jane opened a pathway for understanding between the Ojibwe and the Americans who had come among them, introducing them to the idea Indian 'culture.' By a mixture of canny diplomacy and chance, the Ojibwe avoided the sort of conflict that marked so much of the era, allowing them to remain on their homelands in relative peace.

The situation would change considerably during the mid nineteenth century, as the U.S. developed interest in Ojibwe land as a rich source of copper, iron and timber. During the last five decades of the nineteenth century, settlement increased dramatically, transforming the rough and remote old Northwest into the bucolic Midwest. The Ojibwe resisted this invasion not through battle, but through rhetoric. During this time, Ojibwe writers like George Copway (1818-69) and Andrew Blackbird (1817-1908) wrote impassioned essays critiquing American settlement and articulating the need for a permanent Ojibwe homeland. Through the efforts of Ojibwe leaders and their allies, the Ojibwe were largely able to avoid removal from their homelands—the fate of so many of their contemporaries. Yet, by the end of the nineteenth century, the once vast territories of the Ojibwe were reduced to small holdings scattered throughout the Great Lakes region.

The Ojibwe continue to exist today on dozens of reserves and reservations spread across Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Montana, North Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan—as well as large urban communities in Toronto, Winnipeg,

Milwaukee, Madison, and Minneapolis. According to Gerald Vizenor, the Ojibwe now boast of "more published writers than any other tribe on this continent" (*Touchwood* v). The last century has seen the publication of poetry, drama, and novels by Heid E. Erdrich, Lise McCloud, Gordon Henry Jr., David Treuer, Gerald Vizenor, Winona LaDuke, Kimberly Blaeser, Denise K. Lajimodiere, Drew Hayden Taylor, Jim Northrup, along with many, many others. Some, such as Louise Erdrich and Joseph Boyden, have even become household names, garnering widespread critical praise and international audiences.

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The idea for this dissertation came to me during the summer of 2009. I was back home in Minnesota doing some volunteer work for Winona LaDuke's White Earth Land Recovery Project. Earlier that spring, my grandfather (Winona's janitor) had called to tell me that WELRP needed some help. The economic crash of 2008 had caused WELRP's funding to dry up, forcing the organization to lay off most of their staff—Grandpa said the building was basically empty. He suggested that, since I had a good education and would be home for the summer anyway, that I should come in to help write grants. Being a 24-year-old graduate student looking to avoid studying for my comprehensive exams, I felt superbly qualified to write federal grants for a non-profit.

As it turns out, I wasn't.

However, I did get to spend the summer perusing WELRP's wonderful collection of Ojibwe literature. In between marathon sessions of trying to understand the labyrinthine complexities of grant reporting, I read the essays of Jim Northrup and the

poetry of Gerald Vizenor. During my lunch breaks, I would talk about William Warren's *History* with two wonderful women, the Sherries (Sherri and Sherry), who kept WELRP running despite my incompetence. After going home for the night—no closer to generating a successful grant application—I would think about Ojibwe literature. Specifically, I thought about why, out of the many, many books of Ojibwe literature on WELRP's shelves, wasn't there a book *about* Ojibwe literature?

This dissertation began as an attempt at articulating such an account—an Ojibwe literary history that would situate the literature in the context of the Ojibwe people's distinct history, culture, and their political efforts to protect and expand their political rights as an indigenous nation. I was inspired in this pursuit by the work of scholars working in the field of American Indian literary nationalism—a critical movement developed over the last two decades that seeks, primarily, to focus on the specificity of individual tribal nations' literary output in relation to their various political efforts to maintain and expand their status as sovereign nations within the territorial boundaries of the U.S.[3] One of Nationalism's primary advocates, Jace Weaver, defines nationalist criticism as having two primary concerns:

3 The push that literary nationalism makes toward addressing literature on its merits as work that produces, reinforces and disseminates ideology about indigenous nations has been a much needed and extremely useful paradigmatic shift for the field of Native American literary studies. For much of its (admittedly brief) history, criticism about Native American literature has been concerned with detailing the qualities that make a particular work of literature reflective of a distinctly Native American point of view—what Eric Cheyfitz has called (somewhat dismissively) the 'ethnographic formal' approach. While such work has given us a great insight into the cultural differences that fuel settler/indigenous conflict, it offers little in the way of analysis of the rhetorical or representational mechanisms of the conflict itself. Moreover, in trying to identify what made a certain texts distinctively Native, such criticism has, at times, reified an idealized version of Native identity that judges contemporary literary works against an ahistorical standard of cultural authenticity—with little regard to the social or political context in which a text was produced.

> The first related to the consideration of Native American literary output as separate and distinct from other national literatures. The second deals with a criticism of that literature that supports not only its distinct identity but also sees itself as attempting to serve the interests of indigenes and their communities, in particular the support of Native nations and their own separate sovereignties.[4]

According to another major proponent of nationalist criticism, Craig Womack, both the literary writing of tribal nations along with the criticism of those writings constitutes an important assertion of their status as autonomous nations:

> Native literature, and Native literary criticism, written by Native authors, is part of sovereignty: Indian people exercising the right to present images of themselves and to discuss those images. Tribes recognizing their own extant literatures, writing new ones, and asserting the right to explicate them constitute a move toward nationhood. While this literary aspect of sovereignty is not the same thing as the political status of Native nations, the two are, nonetheless, interdependent. A key component of nationhood is a people's idea of themselves, their imaginings of who they are.[5] (14)

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4 Weaver, Jace. "Splitting the Earth: First Utterances and Pluralist Separatism." in *American Indian Literary Nationalism*. Eds. Warrior, Weaver & Womack. University of New Mexico Press, 2006. p. 15.

5 Womack, Craig. *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism*. University of Minnesota Press. 1999. p. 14.

Using the works of Weaver and Womack as a guide, I set out to begin my own account of Ojibwe literature in the U.S. as a nationalist project.

Yet, as I began my research in earnest, I found that many of the texts I encountered resisted an easy categorization as simply 'Ojibwe' literature. The more I read, the more texts I found that seemed to occupy a liminal space between Ojibwe and U.S. literary traditions, yet seemed to play an active role in the promotion of Ojibwe nationhood. In texts such as these, the two prongs at the heart of Weaver's definition of nationalism seemed to be at odds with one another—texts that seemed to be serving the interests of the Ojibwe, did not necessarily reflect the 'distinct identity' of the Ojibwe particularly well.

Take, for example, George Kabaosa's 1899 play, *Hiawatha, or Nanabozho: Ewh Ojibway Ahnishenahba E Nuh Kuh me ge ze win (oduhmenowin).*[6] A dramatic adaptation of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *The Song of Hiawatha,* the play was meant to be performed by fellow members of the Garden River Reserve in Ontario. With Kabaosa starring, the play proved immensely popular among tourists and resorters in the region—eventually going on tour with its original Ojibwe performers in New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia in 1903, and spending six month's on London's Earls Court in 1905.[7] A script, comprised of both Longfellow's original poem and Kabaosa's Ojibwe translation, was published in 1905. Despite this success, Kabaosa's play has never been included in any anthologies of Ojibwe or Native American writing, in part due to the fact that Kabaosa's script was published under the name of a white man (Canadian rail

6 In modern orthography: "Iw Ojibwe Anishinaabe Inakamigiziwin (Odaminowin)," translation: "An Ojibwe Indian Performance (Play)."

7 Flint, Kathryn. *The Transatlantic Indian, 1771-1930.* Princeton University Press. 2009. p. 135

representative L.O. Armstrong[8]), and in part due to its uncomfortable association with Longfellow's ultra-canonical and infamously kitschy paean to Manifest Destiny.

Of course, digging deeper, we find that Longfellow's poem has an unstable cultural identity as well. Longfellow found his inspiration for *Hiawatha* in the Ojibwe stories published by Henry Rowe Schoolcraft in *Algic Researches*—stories which had originally been translated and composed as short stories by his Ojibwe wife Jane Johnston. Indeed, beyond the ponderous rhyming scheme, the hackneyed inclusion of a doomed love affair between an Ojibwe and a Dakota, and Longfellow's decision to change the name of the Ojibwe culture hero from 'Manabozho' to the more euphonious 'Hiawatha,' much of the narrative content of the poem is little changed from Johnston's original stories. Johnston, moreover, was hardly Longfellow's only Ojibwe interlocutor. Several years before he began work on the poem, Longfellow was introduced to a lecturer who had stopped in Boston to give a lecture Ojibwe manners and customs: George Copway. Longfellow would maintain a correspondence with Copway that would last through the composition and publication of *Hiawatha* and use his writings on Ojibwe traditions to supplement Johnston Schoolcraft's stories. After publishing the first edition of *Hiawatha,* Longfellow was also visited in Cambridge by James Tanner—the son of John Tanner—who helped to correct some mispronunciations of Ojibwe words Longfellow had made in the first edition of the poem.

The sheer intertextuality of a document like Kabaosa's *Hiawatha*—an Ojibwe translation of an American poem based on Ojibwe stories originally published by an

8 The script hints at L.O. Armstrong's lack of involvement in the production of the play, as he is given the ironic Ojibwe name "Waubungay," (waabange) meaning, "he watches" or perhaps more accurately "he is a spectator."

American ethnographer that were originally translated by his Ojibwe wife—makes any meaningful assessment of its belonging definitively to one national literary tradition or another all but impossible. And yet, its political implications for the Ojibwe seem much more clear. As the historian Janet Chute argues, "Kabaosa's Hiawatha play actually provided a gentle form of protection against the barbs of adverse stereotypes cast at the Native community, and the Ojibwa certainly perceived it in this advantageous light."[9] Music historian Michael McNally concurs, arguing that "the pageants became stealthy media for Native agency between the lines of the Longfellow script, and more enduringly, … authorized stage performances of those repertoires enabled a generation of Anishinaabe people to sustain the assault of assimilation and carry forward a vital body knowledge with which a subsequent generation could fashion a renaissance of tradition."[10] Performing *Hiawatha* allowed the Ojibwe at Garden River the opportunity to speak their language and perform culturally important songs and ceremonies in public—activities that had been severely discouraged by both the Canadian and US states. Moreover, they did so in the context of what was, at the time, one of the most popular works of American literature in existence, allowing them to draw on the high-cultural cachet of Longfellow's poem for their own ends.

Most importantly, Kabaosa's *Hiawatha* allowed the Garden River Ojibwe to radically reframe the temporal assumptions of Longfellow's poem. By having

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9 Chute, Janet. "Preservation of Ethnic Identity at Garden River: A Key to Ojibwa Strength." *Papers of the Twenty-Eighth Algonquian Conference.* Ed. David Pentland. University of Manitoba Press. 1997. p. 67.

10 McNally, Michael. "The Indian Passion Play: Contesting the Real Indian in "Song of Hiawatha" Pagents, 1901-1965." *American Quarterly.* Vol 58, no 1. (March 2006). p. 107.

contemporary community members embody figures from the legendary past, Kabaosa's play transformed *Hiawatha* from a narrative of Indian disappearance into a story about Ojibwe persistence. The Euroamerican audiences who witnessed the Garden River Ojibwe playing beloved characters such as Minnehaha and Chibiabos could not help but see a continuity between the poetic past and cultural present that Longfellow's text actively denied. Kabaosa, who by all accounts was as much a savvy politician as he was an imaginative playwright,[11] would have likely been aware that his play was doing political work on behalf of his community. In reclaiming Longfellow's poem as their own, Kabaosa and the community at Garden River created an powerful means of asserting their cultural differences from Euroamericans not as evidence of their lingering primitivism, but as a part of their identity as modern Ojibwe.

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According to the political theorist Kevin Bruyneel, the ways in which indigenous peoples are imagined in relation to time forms a critical aspect of settler colonial politics in the U.S. While many understand the U.S. settler colonialism through the idea of spatial boundaries (e.g., the frontier and the reservation), Bruyneel argues it is actually the erection of "temporal boundaries" around indigenous peoples that do the most damage to their political claims. According to Bruyneel, such boundaries create a division between

11 According to Janet Chute, George Kabaosa was a leader in Garden River's political efforts to reclaim misappropriated land during the early twentieth century, serving as the elected chairman of the reserve in 1916. See Chute, Janet. *The Legacy of Shingwaukonse: A Century of Native Leadership.* University of Toronto Press. 1998. p. 232.

"an 'advancing people' and a 'static' people, placing the latter out of time . . . where they are unable to be modern, autonomous agents"[12] (2, emp. original). The impermeability of the temporal boundaries that separate the Indian past from Euroamerican modernity rely on the logic that when indigenous communities experience social, political, or cultural change it is an implicit accession to Euroamerican dominance, and the diminution of their status as indigenes. Although the temporal boundaries that separate Indians from modernity are ultimately codified in law, they originate, according to Bruyneel, in "economic, cultural, and political narratives that place limitations on the capacity of certain peoples to express meaningful agency and autonomy, especially in the modern context."[13] These narratives, disseminated through various cultural channels, are multiple and even contradictory,[14] but all present the same story: Indianness is a thing of the past.

Given the political significance of narrative in this process, it should come as no surprise that literature is a particularly privileged site for contestations over the relationship between Indianness and modernity. Starting with the inestimable work of Roy Harvey Pearce in *Savagism and Civilization* (1953), there has been a long tradition

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12 Bruyneel, Kevin. *The Third Space of Sovereignty: The Postcolonial Politics of U.S.-Indigenous Relations.* University of Minnesota Press. 2007. p. 2.

13 The effort to impose such temporal boundaries on tribal people in the US is easily apprehended in the various ways in which federal Indian law has tried to define the Indians in terms of their perceived modernity. Take, for example, the in section six of the Dawes General Allotment Act (1886), which immediately provided "all the rights, privileges, and immunities" of U.S. citizenship to those Indians who had "voluntarily taken up . . . residence separate and apart from any tribe of Indians" as long as they had "adopted the habits of civilized life" (Prucha 2000, 172). In effect, the wording of the Dawes act suggests that one could not be modern (possess "the habits of civilized life") and be a member of a Indian community at the same time—the two were simply mutually exclusive. Under the auspices of the law, US citizenship (which should be read, in this instance, as the right to fully participate in modernity) was only available to those who had spatially and temporally removed themselves from a communal Indian identity.

14 See Philip Deloria's idea of the 'internal' and 'external' Indian other in *Playing Indian.* Yale University Press. 1998. pp. 20-26.

in American literary studies of examining the ways in which Euroamerican writing has worked to reinforce the temporal bounds dividing Native and white through narratives about Indian primitivism. More recent works, such as Lucy Maddox's *Removals* (1991) and Joshua Bellin's *Demon of the Continent* (2001), have done much to investigate the political and imperial implications of such images and show how they worked to legitimate the dispossession of tribal peoples in the nineteenth century. Of equal importance has been the work of scholars of Native American literature that shows how Native writers have presented their own narratives of adaptation and survival. Works such as Louis Owen's *Other Destinies* (1992), Robert Warrior's *Tribal Secrets* (1995), Jace Weaver's *That the People Might Live* (1997), Daniel Heath Justice's *Our Fire Survives the Storm* (2006), Maureen Konkle's *Writing Indian Nations* (2006), among many others, have shown how Native writers work to transgress the temporal boundaries meant to contain them by creating narratives of continuity, rather than disjuncture, with the past.

This dissertation aspires to bring these two critical traditions together, working to put U.S. and Ojibwe literatures in dialogue with one another as a means of gaining a richer understanding of literature's role in the temporal construction of Indianness and the role it plays in the politics of Indigenous nationhood in the U.S. Each one of the texts that I discuss in this dissertation articulate a defined stance on the relationship of Indians to modernity—indeed, it can be said to be their defining characteristic. Some, like Longfellow's *Hiawatha* and Jerome Rothenberg's *Shaking the Pumpkin,* rearticulate the settler-colonial conceit: Ojibwe people cannot be modern. Others, like Janet Lewis's *The Invasion,* Louise Erdrich's Matchi Manitou novels, and the writings of Theo Beaulieu

express the opposite sentiment, that Ojibwe communities, despite facing the incredible hardships of colonization and experiencing the massive changes of modernity, still exist as a distinct people, and should be recognized as such. Rather than read U.S. and Ojibwe literatures in isolation, I understand both to be in active dialogue with one another. Understanding the relationship between U.S. and Ojibwe literatures to be one of dialogic transnational exchange[15] allows us to gain a deeper understanding of the cultural and political significance of such works in their historical moments.

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While already seeming like a dated concept to most scholars of American Studies, transnationalism is an approach that has yet to be fully embraced by scholars in the field of Native American Studies. Those who wish to promote the concept of indigenous sovereignty have viewed the political assumptions of transnationalism with a certain degree of skepticism. As the Dakota scholar Philip Deloria pointed out in an address to

15 For the purposes of my argument, I focus my attention almost exclusively on writing by Ojibwe on the American side of the border. The reason for this choice has to do largely with the reasonable necessity of limiting the scope of my project, as well as the (somewhat surprisingly) limited amount of Ojibwe writing from Canada. The most probable explanation for the scarcity of Ojibwe-identified writers in Canada after the mid-nineteenth century has to do with the differing legal and social constructions of tribal identity in the two countries. Given that people of mixed indigenous/European descent historically had greater access to literacy, formal education, and greater economic stability, it should not come as a surprise that the history of Native literary writing has been largely dominated by those of mixed descent. Where in Canada the children of Eurocanadian fur traders and Ojibwe/Cree women were legally and culturally understood to be distinct from their mothers' indigenous communities (they were considered 'Metis' instead), no such differentiation took place in the U.S. Instead, they were considered to be part of their maternal tribal communities—both under U.S. law and (to a greater or lesser degree) the kinship systems of the tribes themselves. Added to this complication is the history of the Riel Rebellions, which resulted in the forced removal of many Metis away from Ojibwe communities in the Great Lakes region to far away settlements in Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, North Dakota and Montana. As a result, many Canadian writers of Ojibwe heritage self-identify do not self-identify as such, preferring to be understood as Metis.

the American Studies Association in 2003, "the decentering of 'nation' comes at a particularly inauspicious time for Indian people, who have invested a great deal of political and intellectual energy building a careful argument in courts, Congress, and regulatory agencies that treaty rights and sovereignty rest upon an acknowledgement of themselves as *nations*."[16] However, a growing number of scholars in the field of American Indian Studies have begun to embrace the term as a meaningful articulation of intellectual and cultural exchanges that occur between different Native polities, as well as those that occur between indigenous communities and settler societies. Joseph Bauerkemper and Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark argue that "Because it cannot help but bring distinctions between nations to the fore, transnational discourse can be fruitfully co-opted as an avenue for rhetorical assertions of indigenous nationhood."[17]

My own use of the term is meant to articulate a similar understanding: that for a transnational relationship to exist between the US and the Ojibwe, both must be in maintenance of some form of nationhood. Indeed, the Ojibwe have long understood themselves as having deep, reciprocal ties to the U.S. as political, cultural, and economic partners. As the historian of Ojibwe political leadership Rebecca Kugel argues:

> The Ojibwe had commenced their political relationship with the Americans on terms that reflected the relative weakness of the United States and, despite

16 Deloria, Philip. "American Indians, American Studies, and the ASA." *American Quarterly.* Vol. 55, no. 4 (Dec 2003). p. 672.

17 Bauerkemper, Joseph and Stark, Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik. "The Trans/National Terrain of Anishinaabe Law and Diplomacy." *Journal of Transnational American Studies.* Vol. 4, no. 1 (2012). p. 6. I do not share Bauerkemper and Stark's concern that the using transnationalism in this way is potentially risky because it "may be read as a investment in colonizing political structures." As I make clear in my fourth chapter, the investment in such colonial political structures has already become a fundamental aspect of Ojibwe national politics.

> American growth, the Ojibwe never acknowledged any change in the basic conceptualization of that alliance. They were acutely aware of shifting power differentials between themselves and the Americans, but this recognition did not alter their insistence that they had created a reciprocal political relationship between equal partners.[18] (199)

Of course, in the power-laden realm of *realpolitik,* the relationship between the Ojibwe and the US is vastly disproportionate, but then again so are most relationships studied under the rubric of transnationalism. While the political and cultural relationship between the US and a Latin American nation such as El Salvador may be similarly unbalanced, we do not seem to question the legitimacy of Salvadoran nationhood—even as we point to massive American interventions into the political, cultural, and economic lives of Salvadorans. Indeed, it could be argued that the study of Transnationalism appeared, in part, as an effort to address the persistence of national identities at a time of nation-state's diminishing sovereignty. So, too, would I examine the history of U.S./Ojibwe relations from the position that states that no matter the degree to which the U.S. has intervened to marginalize and disrupt Ojibwe sovereignty, its nationhood has remained a conceptual, legal, and cultural reality.

The second reason I choose to embrace the term transnationalism in my study has to do with the fact that any formulation of Ojibwe nationhood must be, by its very nature, always-already transnational. Not only do the Ojibwe occupy territory on both sides of

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18 Kugel, Rebecca. *To Be the Main Leaders of Our People: A History of Minnesota Ojibwe Politics, 1825-1898.* Michigan State University Press. 1998. p. 199.

the Canadian/U.S. border, they exist as dozens of individual, autonomous national polities.[19] Despite the legal separation that exists between a place like the Turtle Mountain Reservation in North Dakota and the Hiawatha Reserve in Ontario, there is a recognition not just of shared language, culture, and history, but of participation in a larger Ojibwe community. Rachel Adams argues such relations are a form of "indigenous transnationalism," a term she uses to describe "the divisive, centrifugal forces of modernity that have dispersed North American Indians, but also…the drive to form coalitions across the boundaries of tribal nations and nation-states." Adams understands such coalitions as not just an expedient response to colonization, but as "the resumption of alliances and networks of filiation that were severed by the conquest and its aftermath" (35).[20] Indeed, kinship ties form an important conduit through which a sense of an over-arching Ojibwe nation is maintained, as internal migration between Ojibwe communities has been (and continues to be) a fundamental aspect of Ojibwe life.[21]

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19 In Minnesota alone, for example, there are seven different Ojibwe reservations: Bois Forte, Leech Lake, Fond du Lac, Mille Lac, White Earth, Red Lake, and Grand Portage—not to mention a substantial population of urban Ojibwe in Minneapolis (indeed, many of the Ojibwe nations in Minnesota have offices in Minneapolis in order to serve their off-reservation citizens). Of these seven tribal nations, six make up the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe, an umbrella organization that manages each of the six member reservations under a single constitution. The seventh, Red Lake, is independent (and fiercely so, having never ceded its land to the U.S. Government). Each of these reservations constitute their own nation—with its own government, laws, and leaders—yet each recognizes the others as part of the larger community of Ojibwe. Some even extend the same rights to citizens of the other Ojibwe nations as they do their own.

20 Adams, Rachel. *Continental Divides: Remapping the Cultures of North America.* University of Chicago Press. 2009. p. 35. Adams warns, however, that such an understanding of transnationalism must take into account "the vexed condition of contemporary Native American politics in which a desire for solidarity across national lines rests uneasily against the nationalist assumptions underlying tribal claims to land and sovereignty" (35).

21 Take, for example, my family, who have kinship ties to several Ojibwe tribal nations. Although they are enrolled at White Earth, they trace their ancestry back to the Lake Superior Band Ojibwe at the Lac Du Flambeau reservation in Wisconsin. During the Great Depression, my great-grandfather's brothers left White Earth to work with the CCC's Indian Division on the Grand Portage reservation in the Arrowhead region of Minnesota, and their families have been there ever since. My aunt married a man from the Bad River Ojibwe reservation in Wisconsin, so my cousins claim affiliation there. These sort of

Lastly, I use the term transnational (perhaps most idiosyncratically) to refer to the process by which a sense of Ojibwe nationhood is created and maintained. Rather than understand Ojibwe nationhood as a transhistorically stable object, I see it instead as a process—a process that changes who the Ojibwe are—politically, economically, and culturally, both from within and without. Nationhood has been a powerful rhetoric by which indigenous peoples have gained recognition, asserted self-determination, and made legal claims, but it is not an indigenous form of social organization. Here, I am following Scott Richard Lyon's argument that indigenous nations have not existed from time immemorial, but are "a modern invention born at the moment of the treaty."[22] Like Lyons, I see the project of indigenous nationalism as a conscious decision to embrace modernity, sometimes (but not always) at the cost what might be called the 'traditional.' By taking on the nation-form as a way of organizing themselves the Ojibwe people have had to radically transform themselves—adopting institutionalized modes of governance, engaging in the global economy as a collective, and (most importantly for the purposes of this dissertation) developing a distinct national identity through embracing distinctions between 'high' and 'low' culture. The transformations necessary to establish a sense of modern Ojibwe nationhood are what I mean to evoke, in part, in my use of the term transnationalism.

In thinking through this definition of transnationalism, I am indebted to Gerald Vizenor's concept of transmotion, which he defines as "that sense of Native motion and

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complex networks of affiliation are hardly unique among Ojibwe families and serve to tie various Ojibwe communities together.

22 Lyons, Scott Richard. *X-Marks: Native Signatures of Assent.* University of Minnesota Press. 2010. p. 131.

an active presence," which Vizenor argues constitutes "*sui generis* sovereignty."[23] Here, Vizenor refers to a form of sovereignty that does not refer to absolute political authority over a bounded territory, but rather "the substantive rights of motion in native communities."[24] Importantly, the motion that Vizenor describes here is not just the movement through space (although this is a vitally important part of his concept) but also through time—the ability of a community to adapt to changing circumstances but still assert its existence as a community. As such, Vizenor sees his definition of sovereignty-as-motion as having "a natural and historical presence in the notions of and theories of transnational survivance."[25] My use of the term transnational, therefore, is meant to recognize the degree to what we call Ojibwe nationhood can be understood as an expression of such transmotion: not an end in itself, but the process of constantly asserting Ojibwe presence in modernity

Ultimately, what we call indigenous nationalism is, in fact, a deeply transnational phenomenon—less of an effort to establish absolute cultural and political independence from the U.S., than an effort to make the U.S. more responsive to indigenous political demands. As Kevin Bruyneel argues, indigenous peoples' resistance to U.S. settler colonialism has always had the seemingly ambivalent aims of "demanding rights and resources from the liberal democratic settler-state while also challenging the imposition

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23 Vizenor, Gerald. *Fugitive Poses: Native American Scenes of Absence and Presence.* University of Nebraska Press. 1998. p. 15.

24 Ibid. p. 182.

25 Ibid. p. 183.

of colonial rule on their lives."[26] This ambivalence is not the sign of logical inconsistency, but rather a serious challenge to dominant ideas about state power, identity, and the nation. Refusing to accede to American political authority or secede from the American state, indigenous nations inherently challenge the stability and coherence of the concept of nationhood itself. As Bruyneel argues, "U.S.-indigenous politics, at its core, is a battle between an American effort to solidify inherently contingent boundaries and an indigenous effort to work on and across these boundaries, drawing on and exposing their contingency to gain the fullest possible expression of political identity, agency, and autonomy."[27]

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This dissertation examines how literature by and about the Ojibwe has been the ground on which this imaginative battle has been fought, a space in which the idea of Ojibwe nationhood is imagined, contested, and defended for more than a century. To this end, I have structured "Our War Paint" around the shifting landscape of federal Indian law in the post treaty-making era—a period roughly covering from 1886 to the present day. Federal Indian policy offers a site at which dominant conceptions of Indian nationhood (or lack thereof) take their most active and stable form. Therefore, by examining the historical moments during which Federal Indian policy significantly changes, we can gain incredible insight into how such figurations come into being, how

26 Bruyneel, p. xvii.

27 Ibid. p. 6.

they are disseminated, and how they are resisted. Each chapter of "Our War Paint" focuses on the literary responses to (or prefigurations of) the four major shifts in federal Indian policy: the Dawes General Allotment Act of 1886, the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, the termination efforts of the 1950s, and the advent of Tribal Self Determination Policy in 1973. In each chapter, I read literary writing by both Ojibwe and non-Natives as sites in which the particular settler/indigenous politics of their eras are reflected, offering insight into what Eric Cheyfitz calls the "colonial dynamic of translation," the process by which "Indian communities are subject to, even as they resist, cultural, social, economic, and political translation" by colonial powers.[28] By employing comparative readings of both Ojibwe and non-Ojibwe writers, I offer a more holistic figuration of the overarching structures of feeling that determined U.S./Ojibwe relations at various points in their shared history.

My first chapter examines the English translations of Ojibwe aadizookaanag (sacred stories) that appeared in *The Progress,* a little-known newspaper published on the White Earth reservation between 1886 and 1889. I argue that the editor of *The Progress*, Theo Beaulieu (1850-1923), used these translations as an imaginative supplement to his vision of transforming White Earth into a modern self-governing community. By translating the aadizookaanag into a form that resembled the contemporary conventions of novelistic fiction, I argue that Beaulieu made an implicit case for both the importance of traditional Ojibwe cultural practices, as well as their adaptability to so-called modern forms of social organization and governance. Such a task was of vital importance given

28 Cheyfitz, Eric. "The (Post)Colonial Construction of Indian Country: U.S. American Indian Literatures and Federal Indian Law." *The Columbia Guide to American Indian Literatures of the United States Since 1945.* Ed. Eric Cheyfitz. Columbia University Press. 2006. p. 8.

the looming threat of the Dawes Act to disrupt traditional Ojibwe systems of land-tenure, which was being presented by Euroamerican elites as the only means by which Indians could be brought into modernity. By reading Beaulieu's politically motivated translations of the aadizookaanag, I argue that presenting material from the oral tradition in recognizable Euroamerican literary forms always imbues it with a supplemental significance.

The second chapter assess the positive representation of Ojibwe nationhood by a non-Native, Janet Lewis (1899-1998), in her little known historical novel, *The Invasion* (1932). Inspired by the stories she heard from the descendants of the Johnston family in Sault Ste. Marie, Lewis's novel presents a critical historical account of the Ojibwe's treatment at the hands of white settlers over the course of two centuries—showing their present condition to be the direct product of a continuing process of dispossession. I argue that Lewis's attempt to disrupt the normativity of settler colonialism in the minds of her readers is conceptually related to concurrent efforts by both Native and non-Native activists to recognize indigenous sovereign claims that ultimately led to the passage of the Wheeler-Howard Act in 1934.

Chapter three traces the long and complicated history of Frances Densmore's (1867-1957) translations of Ojibwe nagamonan (dream songs), as they have moved between Ojibwe and non-Native literary contexts over the course of the mid-twentieth century. Initially recorded in the 1900s and '10s as a project of salvage ethnography, the translated songs soon drew the interest of multiple generations of white literary elites, such as Mary Hunter Austin, Kenneth Rexroth and Jerome Rothenberg—who offered their own versions of Densmore's translations. I argue that such literary rewritings of the

nagamonan worked to reinforce a set of assumptions about mid-twentieth century Indians' incomplete knowledge of their own cultural history that underwrote the U.S. policy of termination. Against such representations, I show how Gerald Vizenor (b. 1934) subjects Densmore's translations to a radically different kind of poetics in various editions of *Summer in the Spring* (1965, 1970, 1981, & 1993). I argue that Vizenor's resulting poems comment critically on the temporal logic of termination, reconfiguring an indigenous subjectivity that must always reimagine a history made partially illegible by colonial dispossession.

My fourth chapter turns to Louise Erdrich's (b. 1954) representations of state welfare programs, particularly in *The Painted Drum* (2005), *The Plague of Doves* (2008), and *The Round House* (2012). I argue that Erdrich's negative critical reputation as an apolitical multiculturalist stems, in part, from her ambivalent endorsement of state forms of governance. One of the primary focuses of Erdrich's fictional oeuvre, I assert, has been the effort to show the (not unproblematic) compatibility of traditional forms of Ojibwe belief with that of U.S. and Ojibwe state institutions such as the Indian Health Services and the federally recognized tribal governments. I assert that Erdrich's fiction represents a sustained effort to engage the political sympathies of non-Natives towards the project of Ojibwe self-governance and nationhood in the era of self-determination, as her works operate in a translational register that recasts indigenous communal values into a rhetoric of individual legal rights apprehendable to the state.

1 - Revolutionary in Character

> The Progress *shows all the way through that considerable war paint has been put on. . .*
>
> -Paul Bodeen, editor of the *Red Lake Falls News,* October 1887

> *We are fearful lest friend Bodeen may have took an extensively magnified view of the war-like aspect of our exterior, and thereby caused anxiety to our neighbors across the line, so we rise to explain that our paint is of the mildest order—being simply writing fluid, and our knife and tomahawk, only the 'stick' and 'rule,' Esterbrook and Faber's patent for our arrows and our backbone (a good one for it staid bent for nearly two years and when loosed assumed a handsome perpendicular) for the bow.*
>
> -Theodore Beaulieu, editor of *The Progress,* in response

In this chapter, I will be examining the history of *The Progress*, a little known but historically important newspaper published on the White Earth reservation between 1886 and 1889. During its short existence, *The Progress* would prove to be exceptional both in terms of its significance to Native American legal history, but also in its editor's approach to the translation of the Ojibwe oral stories. The choice to present traditional Ojibwe trickster stories in the form of a serialized novel was, I argue, a conscious and politically motivated decision on the part of the newspaper's Ojibwe editor, Theodore Beaulieu. By adopting the novel's specific strategies of representing time, Beaulieu transformed his versions of the stories into an articulation of a modern Ojibwe cultural identity, and attempted to use this articulation to gain support for his plan to establish a

semi-autonomous Ojibwe homeland on the White Earth reservation. Through this examination, I hope to complicate our understanding of the role that genre and form (particularly that of the novel) play in the nationalist politics of Native American literatures—a role that has yet to be adequately theorized by critics in the field.

A Higher Civilization

On a March day in 1886 the Indian agent of the reservation went with armed guard to an unassuming clapboard shack in White Earth village. This shack, he believed, was the haunt of a dangerous group of revolutionaries. The interior of the shack was little more than a small, spare room, filled almost entirely by a sizable letterpress, the deep wooden drawers of a type case and stacks of bundled newsprint. Neatly mirrored on the galley, already sitting in the press, was the front page of a newspaper. At its head, set in large, plain type was its title: THE PROGRESS. Underneath, in smaller letters, the words: "A higher Civilization: the Maintenance of Law and Order." It was the intent of the agent that this newspaper never leave this shack. To that purpose, he chained the doors and padlocked them shut. He posted a watchman in front of the shack to guard it both day and night. With this business done, the agent set out to find Augustus Beaulieu in order to remove him from the reservation.

Augustus Beaulieu was the scion the most affluent and politically influential mixed-blood family at White Earth. His father, Clement Beaulieu, used his family connections among the Ojibwe to rise through the ranks of the American Fur Company, becoming a major trader, first at La Pointe, then at Lac du Flambeau, and finally at Crow Wing village—where Augustus was born in 1852. Along with the rest of the Mississippi

Band, Augustus relocated to White Earth in 1869, under the terms of a treaty his father and his uncle, Paul Beaulieu, had helped negotiate two years prior. Over his lifetime, Augustus would find employment variously as a clerk, shop-keep, interpreter, real estate agent, and uncredentialed lawyer. At the time of *The Progress's* publication, however, Gus (as he liked to be called) was an acting U.S. Marshal working primarily to curb illegal alcohol sales on Minnesota's Ojibwe reservations. Despite the travel commitments of his job, Gus was an active voice in Ojibwe politics—a commitment, it seems, that inspired him to fund a newspaper on the reservation.

While Gus Beaulieu provided the capital, it was his cousin, Theodore Beaulieu, who would animate *The Progress*, giving it a distinctive voice as its editor. Born in 1852 in the newly-created state of Wisconsin, Theodore (or Theo, as he preferred) came from a less prestigious branch of the Beaulieu family who had settled years earlier in the small village of Appleton, just outside of Green Bay. It was there that a young Theo was apprenticed to Samuel Ryan, the editor and publisher of *The Appleton Crescent,* a small, pro-Republican weekly. After the settlement of White Earth, Theo Beaulieu, like many mixed-bloods in the region, relocated to the reservation, where he married his second cousin (Gus's sister) Julia Beaulieu. On the reservation, he found employment as the superintendent for the Indian schools at White Earth and Leech Lake, a post he held for several years, until the election of Grover Cleveland in 1884. Theo, like many Republican appointees in Indian Affairs, lost his position as the newly empowered Democrats gave positions in the Indian Service (largely seen as patronage appointments) to their partisan supporters. Not only a trained printer, but also naturally gifted in the rhetorical arts, Theo—freshly unemployed—was the perfect candidate to run Gus's fledgling newspaper.

The first issue of *The Progress* was meant to be distributed throughout the White Earth Reservation on March 25, 1886, but by the time of the Agent's raid, Theo Beaulieu had only managed to strike five copies. Fortunately, at least one of these copies survived. Contrary to the belief of the Agent, very little about the first issue of *The Progress* seems revolutionary. Indeed, the first article was a salutatory blessing, written by Gus's brother, the Rev. Clement Beaulieu Jr., an Episcopalian minister, whose opening words would take on a prophetic significance: "With this number we make our bow to the public. The novelty of a newspaper published upon this reservation may cause many to be wary in their support and this from a fear that it may be revolutionary in character." Against this perception, the Reverend offered his reassurance:

> We shall aim to advocate constantly and withhold reserve, what in our view, and in the view of the leading minds upon this reservation, is the best for the interests of its residents. And not only for their interests, but those of the tribe wherever they now are residing. The main consideration in this advocacy, will be the political interests, that is in matters relating to the general Government of the United States … We may be called upon at times to criticize individuals and laws, but we shall do so in a spirit of kindness and justice. Believing that the 'freedom of the press,' will be guarded as sacredly by the Government, on this Reservation as elsewhere we launch forth our little craft, appealing to the authorities that be, at home, at the seat of government, to the community, to give us moral support...[1]

1 Theodore H. Beaulieu, ed, "Salutatory," *The Progress,* 25 March 1886, p 1.

Despite the moderating words of the Reverend, the Beaulieus' little craft foundered almost immediately on the rocky temperament of Timothy Jerrimiah Sheehan, the Indian Agent for the White Earth reservation. At the time Sheehan's tenure as agent at White Earth was new, but already seemed doomed to hostility and misunderstanding. An Irish immigrant and military man, Sheehan had gained distinction as an Indian fighter, having led the defense of Fort Ridgely during the Dakota Uprising two decades earlier. After mustering out, Sheehan spent eleven years as the Sheriff of Minnesota's Freeborn County, a prairie outpost of white settlers on the border with Iowa.[2] A committed Democrat, he was swept into the office of Indian Agent on the same wave which had removed Theo Beaulieu from his position as school superintendent. By all accounts stern and officious, Sheehan proved almost immediately unpopular among the residents of White Earth, especially among the educated mixed-bloods, who were accustomed conducting their affairs with little interference.[3]

For Sheehan, the publication of *The Progress* was the last straw in an escalating conflict between himself and the Beaulieu family, who consistently ignored, chastised and harangued his authority in public. Gus Beaulieu, in the course of his business as U.S. Marshall, travelled on and off the reservation without securing signed permission from Sheehan—an ostensible requirement for all Indians, regardless of occupation. Prior to taking on the editorship of *The Progress,* Theo Beaulieu had published an incendiary

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2 "Memorials of Deceased Members, 1909-14." *Collections of the Minnesota Historical Society, Vol. XV*. Minnesota Historical Society. 1915, pp. 844-5.

3 Gerald Vizenor, *The People Named the Chippewa: Narrative Histories*. Univ. of Minnesota Press. 1995. p. 87.

editorial in a local newspaper on the deteriorating conditions at the Indian schools a under Sheehan's watch. Believing that the Beaulieus intended to use *The Progress* to promote sentiments that were, in his words, "revolutionary to the United States Government and a detriment to the welfare of these Indians," Sheehan decided to act, seizing the Beaulieus' printing press.[4] By publishing the paper "without first obtaining authority or license so to do from the honorable Commissioner of Indian Affairs, or myself as United States Indian Agent," Sheehan accused the Beaulieus of violating the Indian Trade and Intercourse Act.[5] Sheehan ordered Gus Beaulieu to forcibly removed from the reservation, precipitating an armed standoff between the Indian Police and the Beaulieu family. Gus eventually surrendered, and was exiled from the reservation for the better part of a year.

The legality of Sheehan's reaction to *The Progress* was far from clear. At the time, U.S. Indian policy put almost total control over every aspect of reservation life in the hands of Indian Agents, who acted with little oversight or accountability. Indians, as non-citizen wards of the government, had only a questionable claim to rights under the U.S. Constitution—including the right to free speech. Nonetheless, Gus Beaulieu sued Sheehan for the loss of his press, as well as for denying him and his cousin the right to publish under the First Amendment. The case went before Judge R. R. Nelson of the U.S. Circuit Court at St. Paul in November of 1886. Considered by many at the time to be a test case for individual Indians' right to sue agents of the U.S. government, the case was covered by both the local and national press.

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4 qtd. in Vizenor, *The People Named the Chippewa,* p.79.

5 Vizenor, Gerald. "Constitutional Consent." *The White Earth Nation: Ratification of a Native Democratic Constitution.* Ed. Vizenor and Doerfleur. University of Nebraska Press. 2012. p. 40.

In the end, Sheehan's fear of *The Progress's* revolutionary potential proved to be self-fulfilling prophecy. On July 18, 1887, the front page of the *New York Times* announced the results of the case with an unequivocal headline: "A HALF BREED HAS RIGHTS." As the *Times* reported, "Judge Nelson decided that Beaulien [sic] could claim jurisdiction from the court upon the same terms as any other citizen of the United States, despite the fact of his being of Indian parentage."[6] Judge Nelson forced Sheehan to return Beaulieu's property and compensate him two hundred and fifty dollars. After the embarrassment of the trial, a special hearing of the U.S. Senate's Committee on Indian Affairs was convened seemingly with the express purpose of chastising Sheehan for overreaching his authority and further degrading the public's perception of the Bureau of Indian Affairs—already battered by accusations of graft, inefficiency and corruption.[7] At the committee's insistence, Gus Beaulieu was allowed to return to White Earth, where he would be free to publish *The Progress* without censorship or interference on the part of Sheehan or the U.S. government.

After *The Progress* resumed publication in October of 1887, its editor, Theo Beaulieu, took advantage of his newly-recognized rights in order to openly mock his former adversary, ironically reversing Sheehan's characteristic paternalism:

> In an interview with a Globe reporter lately, agent T.J. Sheehan amongst other things said: "So far as the Beaulieu's [sic] are concerned, they are accepting the situation, and will soon be good Indians if they are not already."

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6 "A Half Breed Has Rights." *The New York Times,* 18 July 1887. p. 1.

7 "Sheehan Sat Down." *St. Paul Daily Globe*, 29 Aug. 1887. P. 1.

> Well now, really, that's generous! But we think if that was changed vice verse a little muchee in this wise, viz: "that so far as Timmothy Jerrimiah Sheehan was concerned he was accepting the situation and was getting to be somewhat of a good Irishman, especially since he received such seasonable hints-lessons at the hands of the Circuit Court and the Hon. U.S. Investigating Committee," there would be more truth and less poetry in the assertion.
>
> We have strong hopes (with a little judicial intervention occasionally) to civilize, and make a good democratic Irishman out of "Tim" yet, that is if he remains in White Earth long enough to undergo the necessary transmogrification.[8]

The Progress was hardly the first newspaper to be published by American Indians—the *Cherokee Phoenix* had come into existence nearly sixty years prior—but it was the first to be published on a reservation as an independent enterprise, without the aid (or permission) of Indian Agent, religious organization, or tribal government.

The legal victory the Beaulieus secured over Sheehan was the one of the very first recognitions of Indians' right to free expression under the U.S. constitution. The historical importance of this episode alone could certainly be enough to cement the reputation of *The Progress* as an important document of Native American literature. Yet to understand the full importance of *The Progress,* we must examine the course of the paper after this monumental decision. For two years after the clash with Sheehan, Theo Beaulieu would use *The Progress* to articulate a radical new vision of Ojibwe nationhood

8 Beaulieu, Theo. "Getting Things Mixed." *The Progress,* 29 October 1887. p.4.

at White Earth—one that would reverberate through history to shape not only the future of the reservation, but also have a profound influence on one of the most important Native American writers of the twentieth century.

Beaulieu's Vision

The Beaulieus' confrontation with Sheehan would prove to be only a minor skirmish compared to the full scale battle they would fight in the pages of *The Progress* over looming changes to federal Indian policy. The historical moment at which *The Progress* came into existence was one of massive upheaval in the relationship between settler-colonial states and the indigenous people of North America. With the open hostilities between the plains tribes and the U.S. nearing the end of a protracted détente, the imperial impulse of the U.S. was beginning to be directed outward. Support for the agency system, which had been the primary form of colonial control in Indian country for over a century, was beginning to crumble under sustained accusations of cronyism, fraud and abuse. Across the U.S., Indian reservations were being threatened by illegal settlements of non-Natives emboldened by the racist promise of Manifest Destiny and the lure of free land. The Ojibwe of White Earth followed the news closely as their neighbors, the Lakota, found their expansive reservation being rapidly chipped away by squatters and congressional fiat.[9] Concerned mounted that they would be next.

On December 17th 1887, Theo Beaulieu reprinted, in its entirety, an editorial from *The Duluth Herald.* Spurred by the murder of a local white trader near the nearby Red Lake reservation, the editorialist criticized the "Boston Indianidiocy" for their support of

9 Beaulieu, Theo. "The Great Sioux Reservation," *The Progress,* 17 December 1887. p.4.

the negotiations for a new treaty to be made with the Ojibwe of Minnesota, acidly remarking, “to those who know these Indians, the habits, manners and customs, this gush is simply sickening.” Against the sentimentalism of the urbane and effete friends of the Indian, the editorialist offered his own wisdom, borne (apparently) of his direct experience with the Ojibwe: “Indians have a profound contempt for all whitemen. They fear them it is true, but an Injun is an Injun clear through, and when he gets a chance, he will never fail to do a white man up.” He continued, “There are thousands of acres of splendid timber lands and farming lands within the boundaries of this reservation that are now simply used as a resort for murderers, loafers, whiskey pirates, and fur thieves.” The editorial represented to the Minnesota Ojibwe an opening salvo in the propaganda campaign by local whites to open the Ojibwe reservations to white settlement, “If the United States government really desires to benefit the Indians, let them be given citizen's rights, and left to sink or swim with the rest.” [10]

In rebutting the editorialist for the *Duluth Herald*, Theo Beaulieu accused the anonymous writer of sustaining his own “prejudicial sentimentality,” arguing that his exaggerated depiction of Ojibwe as marauders and thieves was “befitting only the cheap vaporing of the writers of 'dime novels.'” Such hysterical portrayals, Beaulieu wryly observed, only slightly obscured the editorial’s true politics: “The thousands of acres of land, the millions of feet of pine timber, etc., –there's the rub, that's the eyesore of the hordes of vampires who are endeavoring by fair or foul means to get the 'lion's share' of this 'Redskin Alasatia.'”[11]

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10 Beaulieu, Theo. “Prejudicial Vagaries!” *The Progress,* 17 December 1887, p. 1.

11 Ibid.

Theo Beaulieu well understood the precariousness of White Earth's future. He knew that reservation lands were coveted by non-Natives who saw them as little more than unexploited sources of farmland, mineral deposits, and timber. White Earth, due to its large size and distinctive geographic mix of open, arable prairie and vast stands of pine, was exceptionally desirable to potential farmers and timber interests. Moreover, much of the 900-square-mile reservation was vacant—sparsely populated by the few Ojibwe bands who had been willing to consolidate at White Earth in the 1860s. Yet, as long as the Ojibwe remained legal wards of the U.S. and their lands remained in communal trust, Euroamerican access to White Earth was cut off.

The passage of the Dawes General Allotment Act during the paper's hiatus, however, had radically changed the equation—threatening to throw the doors open to Euroamerican settlement of reservation lands across the U.S., including White Earth. The effort to enact allotment policy among the Ojibwe of Minnesota was spearheaded by U.S. Senator Knute Nelson, who formed a commission to treat with them. Under Nelson's proposed legislation, the Ojibwe of Minnesota, spread across several small reservations throughout the state, would be consolidated at White Earth, where they would receive allotments in severalty. The land of the former reservations would then be sold, the proceeds used to form a trust that would fund the 'civilization' of the Ojibwe.[12]

The initial editorial stance of *The Progress* to allotment policy was equivocal and strained. At various points, Beaulieu expressed his cautious optimism for the proposal to

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12 For an in-depth history of the history of allotment at White Earth, see Meyers, Melissa. *The White Earth Tragedy: Ethnicity and Dispossession at a Minnesota Anishinaabe Reservation.* University of Nebraska Press. 1994.

bring better education and more agricultural technology to White Earth, but remained somewhat skeptical of the system of land allotment proposed by the Dawes Act. The idea of allotment was not new to the Ojibwe of White Earth. Under the terms of the 1867 treaty which created the reservation, each Indian that resided on White Earth was entitled to claim as much as 160 acres of land as private property. Yet taking up such allotments was never mandatory under the treaty, and few Ojibwe had actually done so. Moreover, under the treaty provisions (unlike Nelson's bill), any such allotments were inalienable save to other members of the band.

The Nelson legislation proposed radical changes to White Earth's allotment policy. Instead of each Ojibwe receiving a full 160 acre allotment, the Nelson bill capped possible land claims to 80 acres, and created a hierarchical system that gave preference to legally married couples (i.e., Christianized heterosexuals), and diminished the claims of the unmarried and children. The Nelson bill was especially onerous to married women, who were barred from claiming allotments altogether—ostensibly as a means of protecting them from exploitation by confidence men. In an essay written for *The Progress,* Gus Beaulieu put the Nelson's revisions to the Treaty of 1867 in stark relief by reframing the revisions as forfeitures: "Therefore the proposed treaty requires every person belonging to that band … to relinquish without remuneration a certain amount of land as follows: each person under 18 years of age, 120 acres; each person over 18 years of age, 80 acres; and every married woman not the head of a family, 160 acres…"[13] Most disturbing to the White Earth Ojibwe was the possibility that any 'surplus land' left over

13 Beaulieu, Gus. "Why He Objects to the Treaty," *The Progress,* 03 December 1887, p. 1.

after allotment could be sold to non-Natives, opening the reservation up to settlement and allowing what remained of their land base to pass out of their control

The proposed changes to their established system of land tenure could not help but remind the White Earth Ojibwe of a similar conflict that had devastating effects for their kinsmen to the north. Two years prior, the political crisis between the Metis and the Canadian Government over land rights had erupted on the plains of the North-West Territory, leading to the second armed rebellion by the Metis in as many decades. The hostilities culminated in the Battle of Batoche in 1885, during which the charismatic Metis leader, Louis Riel, was captured, and later executed for treason. The Ojibwe of Minnesota were deeply tied to the Canadian Metis through shared history, culture, and blood. Indeed, some Metis refugees, fleeing a hostile Canadian Army, found refuge with the Ojibwe of Minnesota and North Dakota after the rebellion had been violently put down.

The violent response of the Canadian government to Metis demands had shocked Theo Beaulieu, who saw his own politics reflected in Metis demands for civic equality and secure title to their own land. “There is no doubt but the half-breeds of the Northwest have grievances,” Beaulieu wrote:

> Why Canada, in pursuance of the English policy of treating with the Indians, has suffered the grievance to exist, is past comprehension. But, setting aside all the fine distinctions which imperial and colonial policies have set up, the fact remains that the treatment of the Northwest half-breeds is one which is against sound moral sense. Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont doubtless made a mistake in the

> extremes to which they carried the rebellion…Yet, one cannot help but seeing that underneath, all through, outcomes were inconsiderate, and that the causes were just.[14]

Ominously, Beaulieu warned, "Similar conditions have existed on this side of the boundary line, and, exist to-day!" To prove his point, Beaulieu reprinted underneath his editorial a letter he had received from two mixed-bloods, Alexandre Jeanotte and Louis Lenoir, from the Turtle Mountain reservation in North Dakota, where an allotment scheme similar to Nelson's had been enacted a few years prior. The two men relate the state's confiscation of horses and farming equipment from the mixed bloods, claiming them as forfeiture for failure to pay taxes on land allotments. "These are but a few instances," Jeanette and Lenoir men wrote, "of the injustices and indignities we have been subjected to since taking our land in severalty."[15]

In an 1889 editorial entitled 'What Do We Want?' Beaulieu laid out an alternative proposal for the future of White Earth, one which would allow his people to avoid the fate of both the Canadian Metis and the mixedbloods of Turtle Mountain. Pointing to provisions included in the Nelson legislation that granted U.S. citizenship to those Indians who took up allotments, Beaulieu articulated a radical vision of the future of White Earth: "As citizens we must have *rights in the courts*, but shall we be obliged to the courts outside the reservation? Rather let us have *a county by ourselves* comprising the whole of White Earth reservation, with a judge and juries of our own[.]" On the same

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14 Beaulieu, Theo. "Gabriel Dumont," *The Progress,* 27 April 1889, p. 4.

15 Jeanotte, Alexandre and Lenoir, Louis. "Might is Right," *The Progress,* 27 April 1889, p. 4.

page, Beaulieu also printed a portion of the original 1867 treaty under the headline 'It Still Lives,' drawing attention to the language that retained such allotments for the Indians of White Earth in perpetuity: "… the land so held by *any Indian* shall be exempt from taxation and sale for debt, and shall not be alienated except with the approval of the Secretary of the Interior, and in no case to any person not a member of the Chippewa tribe."

In pairing these two sentiments together, Beaulieu was attempting to outline a vision of the future in which the Nelson bill would offered a pathway to greater Ojibwe sovereignty. Contrary to the architects of the allotment scheme who saw the policy as a means of breaking up tribal polities, Beaulieu saw an opportunity for the White Earth Ojibwe to regain a degree of political autonomy they hadn't known in decades. By gaining U.S. citizenship, the Ojibwe at White Earth would have the capability to organize their own governmental institutions and have a direct say in the policies that affected their lives. Moreover, in Beaulieu's mind, the wording of the 1867 treaty meant that the Ojibwe of White Earth would still benefit from the special protections from alienation and taxation—keeping the land base of the reservation intact and preserving it for exclusive use by members of the tribe. Overall, Theo Beaulieu's vision was revolutionary—a semi-autonomous Ojibwe homeland with its own government and courts. Beaulieu didn't just want freedom from the autocratic rule of the agency system, he wanted nothing less than the complete modernization of Ojibwe life.

During a brief historical moment in the late 1880's, such a plan looked vaguely possible—but only by convincing the drafters of the allotment plan to preserve the territorial integrity of the reservation as a homeland for the Ojibwe while extending them

the rights of citizenship. Doing so, however, would not just entail a great deal of legal and political maneuvering, but cultural work as well. In order to make his vision of a modern, self-governing Ojibwe homeland a reality, Beaulieu had to resist representations of Indian backwardness and savagery (such as those espoused by the editor of the *Duluth Herald*) [16] while simultaneously arguing for the protection of Ojibwe culture—with its unique ties to the land. Only through making the case that modernity and Ojibwe cultural identity were not mutually exclusive could Theo Beaulieu convince non-Natives that the Ojibwe at White Earth deserved to govern their own affairs on their own land.

Beaulieu would lay out just such a case in an editorial published in the June 23, 1888 edition of *The Progress,* entitled "Race Prejudice." The editorial, printed under the name "Wah-Boose" (Wabooz, or 'Rabbit,' likely a pseudonym for Beaulieu), is a call for an end to the unfair assessment of Indians as "incapable of advancement to that plane which, in this century, and in this country, is deemed a necessary requirement, by those who desire to occupy a recognized position in social life." Wah-boose argues that the white public's continued belief in Indian inferiority is based on a "superficial reading of

16 Indeed, Beaulieu argued often and vociferously that the thing holding back the Ojibwe from modernity was not Indians' innate backwardness, but rather their white overseers, whose interests were served by keeping their Indians in a perpetual state of tutelage:

> Let the Indians be consulted liberally on all matters concerning their interest, and let their views, however humble, receive that homage which is due betwixt man and man; you will then make them feel 'that responsibility which attaches to all human beings.' Otherwise, if the old chronic system is persisted in, that of coming to him with a hymn book in one hand and a hungry purse in the other, and with all your own and your wife's relatives after you, to live at the expense of the Government warehouses, occupy all the positions which the law says belongs to the Indians, and in fact to live a life of luxury and ease, with but an occasional effort of singing a hymn to appease the cravings of their hungry stomachs, and telling them that 'they must be good Indians, to pray morning, noon and night, to quit using tobacco and shun fire water, to not go fishing on Sundays and above all, to tell the truth and live (just) like the white people, with the assurance that if they do this, at some future day they will die and go to—to heaven and occupy some corner in the heavenly domain, PROVIDED, that no white settler or politician wants it!'

modern opinions" rather than "the observations of centuries," an oversight he provocatively credits to Euroamericans' "lack of literary acumen." Arguing "our [the Ojibwe's] social conditions in this century is [sic] but identical with that of the Anglo-Saxon of the past," Wah-Boose quotes a description of many of his white reader's ancestry from Hippolyte Taine's *History of English Literature* (1864):

> Huge white bodies, cold blooded, with fierce blue eyes, reddish flaxen hair, ravenous stomachs filled with meat and cheese, heated by strong drink; of a cold temperament, slow to love, homestayers, prone to brutal drunkenness, pirates at first; of all kinds of hunting, the man-hunt the most profitable and most noble. They dashed to sea in their two sailed barks, landed anywhere, killed everything, and having sacrificed in honor of their gods the tithe of their prisoners, and leaving behind them the red light of their burnings went further on to begin again.

Taine's description of the Saxons is evocative in the context of Wah-Boose's essay not only for its unsettling depiction of savagery as a racial characteristic of whiteness, but also for the descriptive resonance it has with that of the editorial from the *Duluth Herald*. Wah-Boose continues by arguing that modern whites themselves hadn't fully emerged from this state of barabarism, saying "there are thousands upon thousands in the slums of American and European cities whose conditions, intellectually and morally, are far below those of the average Indian." Drawing on this vision of a decadent and hypocritical Euroamerican society, Wah-Boose warns: "Macauley says that history has a tendency to repeat itself; in his minds eye he saw the New Zeelander gazing from the bridge upon the

ruins of London! Pursue the analogy, and might not the future red man gaze upon the ruins of New York and Brooklyn from their great suspension bridge?"[17]

The resonance of this apocalyptic post-colonial image is made all the more profound by Wah-Boose's invocation of Taine's *History,* a book which may have inspired Theo Beaulieu to embark on a project of publishing translations of the Ojibwe oral tradition in the pages of *The Progress*. Immensely popular at the time of its publication (but now largely ignored), one of the defining arguments of Taine's *History* was that the "natural bent" of the Saxon race remained the defining feature of English literature and culture, despite the huge cultural and political changes brought about by the Norman Invasion.[18] Although Taine believed the reassertion of Saxon cultural identity was primarily due to inherent race traits that were better suited to the climate of the British Isles, Taine also believed that the Saxons continued to resist Norman hegemony through literary writing. Explaining how the Saxons adopted Norman-French literary forms (like the ballad) for their own folk tales, and then used them to express anti-Norman sentiment, Taine argued that the Saxons were able to maintain their cultural identity and eventually return to cultural predominance as the English. The sort of historical picture Taine painted of a colonial power being subsumed by the indigenous gains a special significance when viewed from the position of the Ojibwe at the end of the 19th century. Facing a similar situation to that of the ancient Anglo-Saxons, Beaulieu found in Taine's account of English literature a model of resistance in which a colonized

17 Wah-Boose, "Race Prejudice," *The Progress,* 23 June 1888, p 1.

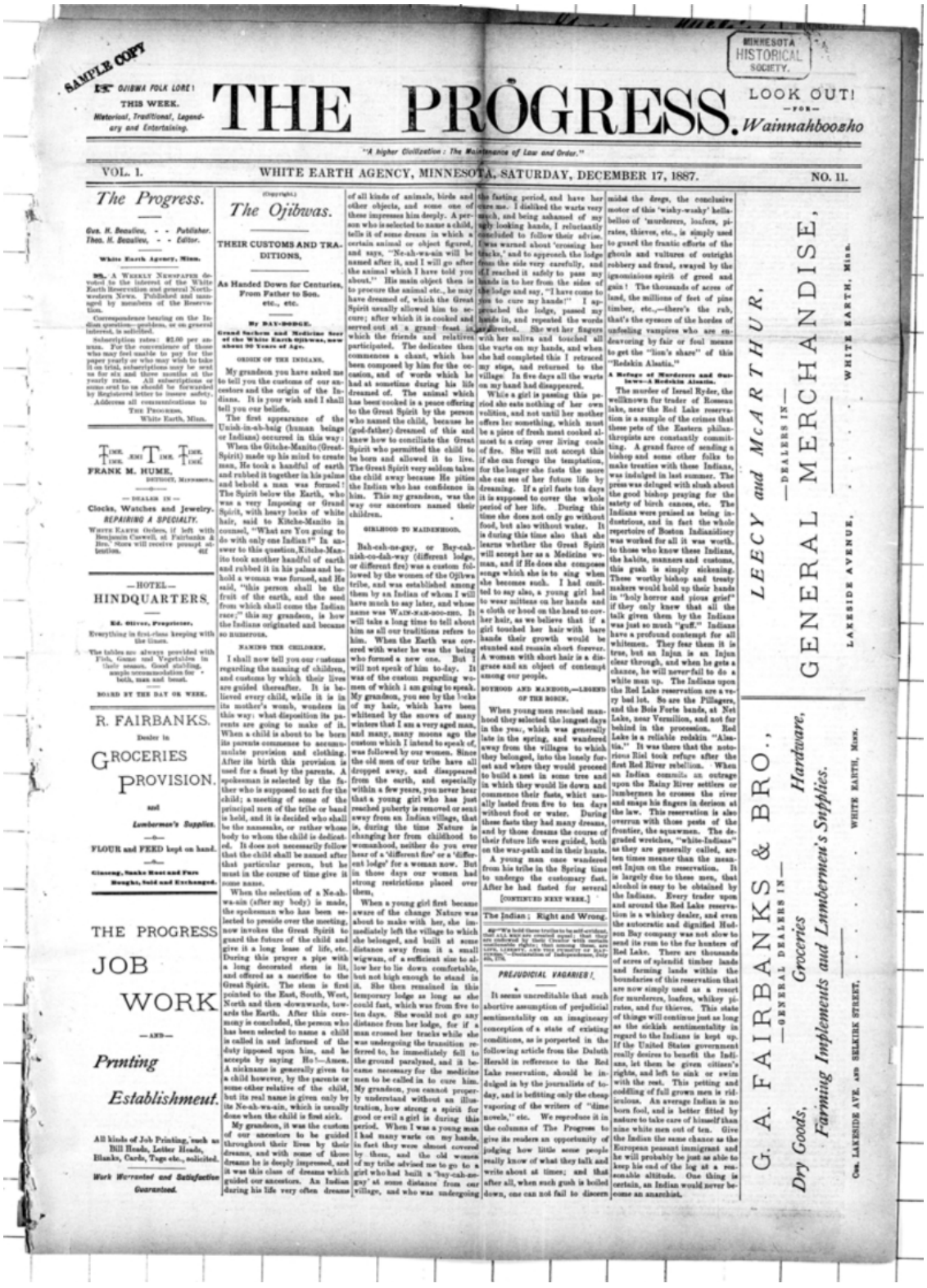
18 Taine, Hippolyte. *History of English Literature.* Translated by H. Van Laun. Holt, 1885, p. 21.

people could appropriate elements of the exogenous literary culture in order to resist, and possibly outlast, their colonial oppressors.

In a series of articles published in *The Progress* during the winter and spring of 1887-8, Theo Beaulieu, as Taine's Saxons had centuries prior, transformed stories from the Ojibwe oral tradition into a literary form appropriated from the culture of his colonizers: the novel. Beaulieu used these translations not only to protest the imposition of the Dawes Act, but as means of demonstrating to the Euroamerican public the capability of the Ojibwe to adapt to modernity on their own terms, while retaining their distinct cultural identity as well as the relationship to the land such culture encoded. Beaulieu's overall goal in publishing the stories was to shift Euroamerican sentiments away from the opening of the reservation to settlement and towards the establishment of White Earth as an independent, self-governing territory with its communal system of land-tenure intact.

When this Country was One Great Reservation

Theo Beaulieu published the first installment of "The Ojibwas, Their Customs and Traditions" alongside the reprinted editorial from *The Duluth Herald,* as an obvious counterpoint to the editorialist's unsympathetic assessment of Ojibwe "habits, manners, and customs" (Fig.1). Beaulieu described the series as being composed of "traditional and legendary" stories, a description that would have had little meaning for a Euroamerican reader, but special significance for an Ojibwe. Beaulieu's description of two different kinds of stories reflects an understanding of the generic distinction the Ojibwe made



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MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

LOOK OUT! —FOR— Wainnahboozhoo

THE PROGRESS.

"A higher Civilization: The Maintenance of Law and Order."

VOL. 1. WHITE EARTH AGENCY, MINNESOTA, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 17, 1887. NO. 11.

OJIBWA FOLK LORE! THIS WEEK. Historical, Traditional, Legendary and Entertaining.

The Progress.

Gus. H. Beaulieu, - - Publisher.
Theo. H. Beaulieu, - - Editor.

White Earth Agency, Minn.

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The Ojibwas.

THEIR CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS,

As Handed Down for Centuries, From Father to Son. etc., etc.

By DAY-DODGE.

Grand Sachem and Medicine Seer of the White Earth Ojibwas, now about 90 Years of Age.

ORIGIN OF THE INDIANS.

My grandson you have asked me to tell you the customs of our ancestors and the origin of the Indians. It is your wish and I shall tell you our beliefs.

The first appearance of the Unish-in-ah-baig (human beings or Indians) occurred in this way:

When the Gitche-Manito (Great-Spirit) made up his mind to create men, He took a handful of earth and rubbed it together in his palms and behold a man was formed! The Spirit below the Earth, who was a very Imposing or Grand Spirit, with heavy locks of white hair, said to Kitche-Manito in counsel, "What are You going to do with only one Indian?" In answer to this question, Kitche-Manito took another handful of earth and rubbed it in his palms and behold a woman was formed, and He said, "this person shall be the fruit of the earth, and the seed from which shall come the Indian race;" this my grandson, is how the Indians originated and became so numerous.

NAMING THE CHILDREN.

I shall now tell you our customs regarding the naming of children, and customs by which their lives are guided thereafter. It is believed every child, while it is in its mother's womb, wonders in this way: what disposition its parents are going to make of it. When a child is about to be born its parents commence to accumulate provision and clothing. After its birth this provision is used for a feast by the parents. A spokesman is selected by the father who is supposed to act for the child; a meeting of some of the principal men of the tribe or band is held, and it is decided who shall be the namesake, or rather whose body to whom the child is dedicated. It does not necessarily follow that the child shall be named after that particular person, but he must in the course of time give it some name.

When the selection of a Ne-ah-wa-sin (after my body) is made, the spokesman who has been selected to preside over the meeting, now invokes the Great Spirit to guard the future of the child and give it a long lease of life, etc. During this prayer a pipe with a long decorated stem is lit, and offered as a sacrifice to the Great Spirit. The stem is first pointed to the East, South, West, North and then downwards, towards the Earth. After this ceremony is concluded, the person who has been selected to name a child is called in and informed of the duty imposed upon him, and he accepts by saying He!—Amen. A nickname is generally given to a child however, by the parents or some other relative of the child, but its real name is given only by its Ne-ah-wa-sin, which is usually done when the child is first sick.

My grandson, it was the custom of our ancestors to be guided throughout their lives by their dreams, and with some of those dreams he is deeply impressed, and it was this class of dreams which guided our ancestors. An Indian during his life very often dreams of all kinds of animals, birds and other objects, and some one of these impresses him deeply. A person who is selected to name a child, tells it of some dream in which a certain animal or object figured, and says, "Ne-ah-wa-sin will be named after it, and I will go after the animal which I have told you about." His main object then is to procure the animal etc., he may have dreamed of, which the Great Spirit usually allowed him to secure; after which it is cooked and served out at a grand feast at which the friends and relatives participated. The dedicatee then commences a chant, which has been composed by him for the occasion, and of words which he had at sometime during his life dreamed of. The animal which has been cooked in a peace offering to the Great Spirit by the person who named the child, because he (god-father) dreamed of this and knew how to conciliate the Great Spirit who permitted the child to be born and allowed it to live. The Great Spirit very seldom takes the child away because He pities the Indian who has confidence in him. This my grandson, was the way our ancestors named their children.

GIRLHOOD TO MAIDENHOOD.

Bah-cah-ne-gay, or Bay-cah-nish-co-dah-way (different lodge, or different fire) was a custom followed by the women of the Ojibwa tribe, and was established among them by an Indian of whom I will have much to say later, and whose name was WAIN-NAH-BOO-ZHO. It will take a long time to tell about him as all our traditions refers to him. When the Earth was covered with water he was the being who formed a new one. But I will not speak of him to-day. It was of the custom regarding women of which I am going to speak. My grandson, you see by the locks of my hair, which have been whitened by the snows of many winters that I am a very aged man, and many, many moons ago the custom which I intend to speak of, was followed by our women. Since the old men of our tribe have all dropped away, and disappeared from the earth, and especially within a few years, you never hear that a young girl who has just reached puberty is removed or sent away from an Indian village, that is, during the time Nature is changing her from childhood to womanhood, neither do you ever hear of a 'different fire' or a 'different lodge' for a woman now. But in those days our women had strong restrictions placed over them,

When a young girl first became aware of the change Nature was about to make with her, she immediately left the village to which she belonged, and built at some distance away from it a small wigwam, of a sufficient size to allow her to lie down comfortable, but not high enough to stand in it. She then remained in this temporary lodge as long as she could fast, which was from five to ten days. She would not go any distance from her lodge, for if a man crossed her tracks while she was undergoing the transition referred to, he immediately fell to the ground paralyzed, and it became necessary for the medicine men to be called in to cure him. My grandson, you cannot properly understand without an illustration, how strong a spirit for good or evil a girl is during this period. When I was a young man I had many warts on my hands, in fact they were almost covered by them, and the old women of my tribe advised me to go to a girl who had built a 'bay-cah-ne-gay' at some distance from our village, and who was undergoing the fasting period, and have her cure me. I disliked the warts very much, and being ashamed of my ugly looking hands, I reluctantly concluded to follow their advice. I was warned about 'crossing her tracks,' and to approach the lodge from the side very carefully, and if I reached it safely to pass my hands in to her from the sides of the lodge and say, "I have come to you to cure my hands!" I approached the lodge, passed my hands in, and repeated the words as directed. She wet her fingers with her saliva and touched all the warts on my hands, and when she had completed this I retraced my steps, and returned to the village. In five days all the warts on my hand had disappeared.

While a girl is passing this period she eats nothing of her own volition, and not until her mother offers her something, which must be a piece of fresh meat cooked almost to a crisp over living coals of fire. She will not accept this if she can forego the temptation, for the longer she fasts the more she can see of her future life by dreaming. If a girl fasts ten days it is supposed to cover the whole period of her life. During this time she does not only go without food, but also without water. It is during this time also that she learns whether the Great Spirit will accept her as a Medicine woman, and if He does she composes songs which she is to sing when she becomes such. I had omitted to say also, a young girl had to wear mittens on her hands and a cloth or hood on the head to cover her hair, as we believe that if a girl touched her hair with bare hands their growth would be stunted and remain short forever. A woman with short hair is a disgrace and an object of contempt among our people.

BOYHOOD AND MANHOOD,—LEGEND OF THE BEAR.

When young men reached manhood they selected the longest days in the year, which was generally late in the spring, and wandered away from the villages to which they belonged, into the lonely forest and where they would proceed to build a nest in some tree and in which they would lie down and commence their fasts, which usually lasted from five to ten days without food or water. During these fasts they had many dreams, and by those dreams the course of their future life were guided, both on the war-path and in their hunts.

A young man once wandered from his tribe in the Spring time to undergo the customary fast. After he had fasted for several

[CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.]

The Indian: Right and Wrong.

☞ "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that ALL MEN are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are LIFE, LIBERTY, AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS."—Declaration of Independence, July 4th, 1776.

PREJUDICIAL VAGARIES!

It seems incredibable that such abortive assumption of prejudicial sentimentality on an imaginary conception of a state of existing conditions, as is purported in the following article from the Duluth Herald in reference to the Red Lake reservation, should be indulged in by the journalists of today, and is befitting only the cheap vaporing of the writers of "dime novels," etc. We reproduce it in the columns of The Progress to give its readers an opportunity of judging how little sense people really know of what they talk and write about at times; and that after all, when such gush is boiled down, one can not fail to discern midst the dregs, the conclusive motor of this 'wishy-washy' hellabelloo of 'murderers, loafers, pirates, thieves, etc., is simply used to guard the frantic efforts of the ghouls and vultures of outright robbery and fraud, swayed by the ignominious spirit of greed and gain! The thousands of acres of land, the millions of feet of pine timber, etc.,—there's the rub, that's the eyesore of the hordes of unfeeling vampires who are endeavoring by fair or foul means to get the "lion's share" of this "Redskin Alaska."

A Refuge of Murderers and Outlaws—A Reddish Alaska.

The murder of Israel Ryder, the wellknown fur trader of Roseau lake, near the Red Lake reservation is a sample of the crimes that these pets of the Eastern philanthropists are constantly committing. A grand farce of sending a bishop and some other folks to make treaties with these Indians, was indulged in last summer. The press was deluged with slush about the good bishop praying for the safety of birch canoes, etc. The Indians were praised as being industrious, and in fact the whole repertoire of Boston Indianidicy was worked for all it was worth, to those who know these Indians, the habits, manners and customs, this gush is simply sickening. These worthy bishop and treaty makers would hold up their hands in "holy horror and pious grief" if they only knew that all the talk given them by the Indians was just so much "gaff." Indians have a profound contempt for all whitemen. They fear them it is true, but an Injun is an Injun clear through, and when he gets a chance, he will never fail to do a white man up. The Indians upon the Red Lake reservation are a very bad lot. So are the Pillagers, and the Bois Forts bands, at Net Lake, near Vermillion, and not far behind in the processions. Red Lake is a reliable redskin "Alaska." It was there that the notorious Riel took refuge after the first Red River rebellion. When an Indian commits an outrage upon the Rainy River settlers or lumbermen he crosses the river and snaps his fingers in derison at the law. This reservation is also overrun with those pests of the frontier, the squawmen. The degraded wretches, "white-Indians" as they are generally called, are ten times meaner than the meanest Injun on the reservation. It is largely due to these men, that alcohol is easy to be obtained by the Indians. Every trader upon and around the Red Lake reservation is a whiskey dealer, and even the autocratic and dignified Hudson Bay company was not slow to send its rum to the fur hunters of Red Lake. There are thousands of acres of splendid timber lands and farming lands within the boundaries of this reservation that are now simply used as a resort for murderers, loafers, whikey pirates, and fur thieves. This state of things will continue just as long as the sickish sentimentality in regard to the Indians is kept up. If the United States government really desires to benefit the Indians, let them be given citizen's rights, and left to sink or swim with the rest. This petting and coddling of full grown men is ridiculous. An average Indian is no born fool, and is better fitted by nature to take care of himself than nine white men out of ten. Give the Indian the same chance as the European peasant immigrant and he will probably be just as able to keep his end of the log at a reasonable altitude. One thing is certain, an Indian would never become an anarchist.

Fig. 1 - *The Progress*, December 17th 1887. N.B. "Look Out! For Wainnahbozhoo" in the masthead.

between dibaajimowin and aadizookaan—roughly translated as history and legend. The first seven installments of the series were translations of dibaajimowinan, historical descriptions of Ojibwe cultural practices, or traditions, as related by two "centenarians of the reservation," the Midewiwin practitioners Day-Dodge and Say-coss-e-gay. [19] These explanations of Ojibwe practices, including information on the beliefs and rituals of the Midewiwin, were given in Ojibwemowin to Theo Beaulieu, who translated and published them in English.[20]The last four installments of "The Ojibwas" consisted of the stories of Wenabozho, the mythic Ojibwe trickster, interpreted and written by Beaulieu himself. These were translations of the aadizookaanag: stories that primarily concern the exploits of the manidoog or the other-than-human characters that populate Ojibwe cosmology.[21]

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19 Beaulieu, "Indian Traditions and Legends," *The Progress,* 22 October 1887, p 1.

20 These first seven sections were translations of Dibaajimowinan, defined as almost any form of narrative—anecdotal, historical, or even fictional—that is not primarily concerned with the activities of the manidoog or supernatural other-than-human characters. Because they are not concerned with religious matters, Dibaajimowinan, unlike aadizookaanag, are not governed by ritualized seasonal injunctions against repeating them. Although the term refers to all forms of narrative, the term Dibaajimowin carries an etymological connotation of instruction. The root of the noun, dibaa, is common to the class of Anishinaabemowin verbs that deal with measurement (dibaabiigin), inspection (dibaabam) and judgement (dibaakonan), which reflects this class of story's informative function. In the oral tradition, Dibaajimowinan are often educational narratives, imparting a lesson about which the listener must come to some kind of understanding or judgement. An example of this function of the dibaajimowinan is seen in *The Progress* in the account of a young man who becomes a robin after being compelled by his father to fast for too long, despite his protests. This dibaajimowin, found also in Schoolcraft and Barnouw, allegorizes the dangers of parental neglect by transforming the unheeded son into a figure of warning, a robin whose call is meant to warn of danger. Dibaajimowin, however, are not always allegorical, but often times also anecdotal—as can be seen in Beaulieu's addendum to the robin story in which he relates a missionary's account of a robin warning off potential thieves. Both stories, one fictional, the other historical, are meant to instruct primarily to instruct.

21 Traditionally, there are certain ritual injunctions against telling some aadizookaanag outside certain temporal or spatial conditions. For instance, one is only supposed to speak of Wenabozho during the winter months in order to prevent him from eavesdroping on the teller in the form of an insect or flower and retaliating against the teller for repeating an embarrassing story. This sense of literally summoning or drawing the attention of the manidoog is reflected in the word 'aadizookaan' itself. Aadizookaan, unlike dibaajimowin, is an animate noun because the word aadizookaanag refers not only to a class of stories, but is also the word for the characters in them. In Ojibwemowin, nouns are divided into two genders: animate and inanimate. The identification of objects as animate and inanimate generally (but not always) matches

Though he never articulated it in such explicit terms, Theo Beaulieu clearly intuited the connection of the trickster aadizookaanag to the contemporary political struggles of the Ojibwe. In his advertisement for the stories, Beaulieu explicitly connects federal Indian policy with the aadizookaanag, writing that they would tell of the time "when this country was one great reservation and [there were] no Indian agents but Win-ne-boo-zho, no 'U.S.I.D.' but the vast prairies and forests whose portions swarmed with game of all kind."[22] The Wenabozho stories always appeared on the front-page, often adjacent to editorials about the growing dissatisfaction with the governance of the Ojibwe at the hands of government officials.[23] The privileged, front-page juxtaposition of the Wenabozho stories and serious editorial statements by Theo Beaulieu and local leaders, such as the influential ogimaa Waabaanakwad, makes it clear that Beaulieu understood that the stories were meant to have politically significance. As Elizabeth McNiel argues, the Wenabozho stories published in *The Progress* were doing real political and cultural work for the White Earth Ojibwe: "Beaulieu's late nineteenth-century Anishinaabe readers were dealing with their own harsh fates, their worst fears repeatedly having been realized. . . . [T]he trickster story would have served to remind them of their cultural resources."[24]

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an Euroamerican conception of animacy. Things that are alive in some sense are usually animate, but other objects—especially those with spiritual significance—are also figured as being alive, for example 'midewayaan' (medicine bag).

22 Beaulieu, Theo. "Indian Traditions and Legends," *The Progress,* 22 October 1887, p 1.

23 Other short stories, poems and items of curiosity, including traditional stories from other tribes, usually appeared on page three of *The Progress*.

24 McNiel, Elizabeth. "'The Game Never Ends': Gerald Vizenor's Gamble with Language and Structure in *Summer in the Spring*." *American Indian Culture and Resaerch Journal* 19.2 (1995). p. 91-2.

At the same time, those cultural resources were being radically transformed, hinting that Beaulieu was not writing solely for an Ojibwe audience. As Beaulieu explained in his introduction to the stories, the changes he made were primarily for the benefit of his white readers, in order to conform the stories (somewhat) to their literary tastes and expectations:

> … there is much of the legend, whilst being of amusing interest to the Indian ear, loses its sweetest charms when given an English version there are, other portions also that would be considered proper and modest when related in the native tongue, that would sound extemely [sic] harsh, course, vulger [sic] when translated into English. And to attempt to clothe the stories of the legend with acceptable fiction and romance we must needs sacrifice much of their originality, and when we do this their traditional charms and value, alike vanish. Thus our readers will see the difficulties naturally arising in the translation and publication of the legend.[25]

In his description of the difficulty of translating the aadizookaanag, Beaulieu lays bare his intent to convey something of their "traditional charms and value" to a white readership by clothing the aadizookaanag in "acceptable fiction and romance." Beaulieu's effort to

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25 Beaulieu, Theo. "The Ojibwas," *The Tomahawk*, 07 May 1903. p. 1.
N.B.: This quotation comes from a reprinting of the Beaulieu translations made several years after they had been printed in *The Progress.* I've had to cite this version because the issue of *The Progress* in which it had originally appeared was not preserved. The other Beaulieu stories reprinted in *The Tomahawk* appear exactly as they had in *The Progress,* leading me to believe that it is highly likely this quotation would have originally appeared in 1887.

negotiate between the demands of authenticity and cross-cultural communication resulted in a great deal of editorial intervention in the form and narrative structure of the aadizookaanag that moved them "perceptibly in the direction of . . . modern fiction."[26]

Just how much formal intervention was needed for Beaulieu to transform the aadizookaanag into modern novelistic style becomes clear when one compares an oral account of Wenabozho's birth to that which appeared in *The Progress*. First, a literal translation of an oral performance of Wenabozho's birth narrative given to an ethnographer in the mid 20th century:

> One day Naanabozho's mother went out with her mother to get wood. After a while, the mother missed her daughter. There was a very high wind. She looked for her daughter, but she could not find her. Later when the grandmother was chopping wood, she found a little blood on one of the pieces. She brought the piece of wood into the wigwam. She knew the blood was her daughter's. The next morning there was a little baby. That was the beginning of Naanabozho's life, and he lived with his grandmother.[27]

Theo Beaulieu writes:

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26 Velie, Alan. "The Trickster Novel," in *Narrative Chance: Postmodern Discourse on Native American Indian Literatures*, ed. Gerald Vizenor. University of Oklahoma Press, 1993. pp. 126, 128.

27 Qtd in Vizenor, *The People Named the Chippewa*, 11.

> One day, feeling better than usual, [Wenabozho's mother] went outside and lay down beneath the shade of the balsam tree. . . . Suddenly there was a rustle, and a great gust of wind from the north swept by and taking the young girl in his embrace disappeared from the earth. The girl's mother, who had been enjoying a nap, was awakened by the commotion, looked about the wigwam for her daughter, and, being satisfied she was not within, hurried outside searching and calling for her beloved child, but the sweet tones of the nightingale were the only sounds that answered her call. At last, worn and with grief and weeping, she returned to her now lonely wigwam, and while passing the tree under which her daughter had so lately reclined, she overheard a wee little voice say: No-ko-mis (grandmother) do not cry. I am your grandchild, and have been left here to comfort and take care of you. My name is Way-nah-bozho and I shall do many things for the comfort of you and my people. . .[28]

Although the plot of these stories is similar in superficial terms, when examined at the level of language, Beaulieu's reexpressions of this aadizookaan features massive alterations of form, characterization, and temporality that bring them much closer to the literary conventions of the novel. To take just one example, in the oral version of the story above, the emotional state of the characters remains opaque. As James Ruppert points out, the lack of emotional description with regards to characters is a hall-mark of oral narrative traditions, which "develop identity in an essentially apyschological

28 Ibid, 11.

manner."[29] Beaulieu, alternatively, rarely misses an opportunity to describe the "grief," "enjoyment," or "loneliness" of his characters.

However, the most important formal change Beaulieu makes to the aadizookaanag has to do with the way in which temporality is conceived of and represented in the stories, a subtle intervention with radical political implications. By taking stories that had originally been told as non-temporally specific, semiautonomous narratives, and presenting them in a single temporally linked chronicle of Wenabozho's development and maturation, Beaulieu transforms the "nondurational adventure time of the tribal tale into something closer to the chronotope of the modern novel."[30] From his conception and birth to his ultimate confrontation with the Great Gambler, Beaulieu makes of Wenabozho's story a continuous narrative of his maturation and development. While it was common practice in the oral tradition to string several Wenabozho stories together into a single story cycle, the stories themselves were largely told paratactically, linked by extremely minimal coordinating statements. Throughout his reexpression of the aadizookaanag, Beaulieu is at pains to situate the stories as a continuous narrative in which Wenabozho is driven by a single desire: to find and kill the person, being or thing responsible for the death of his mother, only to discover that it was himself.

Yet, why did Beaulieu specifically choose the novel as the form for the translated aadizookaanag? Alan Velie offers no analysis of Beaulieu's reasons for translating the aadizookaanag into the novelistic, commenting only on how his translations depart from

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29 Ruppert, James. *Mediation in Contemporary Native American Fiction*. University of Oklahoma Press, 1995. p. 26.

30 Velie, p. 127.

traditional (and, one suspects, for Velie more 'authentic') ways of telling the tales. Elizabeth McNiel rejects Velie's subtle condemnation of the stories' inauthenticity, but argues that Beaulieu's intervention was meant to only present the Wenabozho stories in a way that "best suit[ed] the intended audience" of "educated Anishinaabe."[31] Both of these analyses fail to recognize how the generic transformation of the aadizookaanag into serialized novel actively worked toward Theo Beaulieu's political goals of advocating of Ojibwe self-government and resisting the imposition of the Dawes Act by explicitly manipulating and upsetting the temporal expectations of a white readership.

In order to understand the ways in which Beaulieu's formal transformation of the aadizookaanag into a novel worked toward his political goals, we must first understand the aadizookaanag's configuration of temporality. Alan Velie mistakenly claims that the chronotope of the aadizookaan is that of the epic, asserting that they "take place in a time before ours...long past and inaccessible."[32] Yet, Velie's statement ignores the ways in which the aadizookaanag encodes its own unique chronotopic conventions. As David Treuer explains, the aadizookaanag "exist outside of time. That is, when the story takes place is of absolutely no importance. It could have happened yesterday or three hundred years ago."[33] An aadizookaan is never definitively set in a particular historical moment (save those that describe the creation of the planet, or the formation of geographical features, which must have occurred prior to the present). The chronotopic alignment of

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31 McNiel, p. 97.

32 Velie, p. 124. In many ways, making any claim that oral narratives *are equivalent*, in any uncomplicated sense, to a form of written genre is a proposition that betrays a certain Eurocentrism.

33 Treuer, David. *Native American Fiction: A User's Manual*. Graywolf Press, 2006. p. 55.

the aadizookaanag is not with the past, as much as it is entirely outside of time, or—perhaps more accurately—with a time parallel to our own (what Gerald Vizernor calls "mythic time"[34]) in which events always seem to be occurring always just beyond our sight.

Indeed, aadizookaanag sometimes move fluidly between past and present tense and even blurring a sense of definitive time altogether by employing the dubitative mood in its description of time, as one can see in this short aadizookaanag, related by the late White Earth elder Joe Auginaush:

> [1] Ahaaw akawe bangii niwii-tibaajimaa a'aw isa Wenabozho. Inashke Wenabozho iidog anooj gii-izhichige. Anooj gegoo ogii-kashkitoon. Akina gegoo ogii-kikendaan iidog.
>
> [2] Inashke dash aabiding iidog, inamadabid imaa—imaa sa endaad iidog. Mii sa gaa-chi-inendang, "Haa ganabaj apane inga-babaamose." Mii iidog maajaad babaamosed. Maagizhaa imaa aandi eyaad iidog wa haa bakitejii'igewag. Miish iidog omaa ezhi-biindiged imaa bakitejii'igwaad. Miish imaa bezhig iidog gaa-izhi-nandomigod, "Hey Wenabozh! Giwii-pakitejii'ige na?" "Haaw isa geget." Wa, mii sa iidog odaminod bakitejii'iged.
>
> [3] Maagizhaa mii sa iidog wiin nitam iwidi obakite'aan i'iw bikwaakwad. Wa, hay' niibawid aazhaa gaa-izhi-bakite'ang. Waa pane iidog i'iw bikwaakwad

34 Vizenor, *People Called the Chippewa,* p. 3.

iwidi chi-waasa iwidi ogii-ani-ganaandaan. Miish iidog imaa gii-ipitood imaa ji-gishiibatood iidog Ojibwe, "Haa Wenabozh! *Home run. Home Run,*" inaa iidog. Haa mii sa go Wenabozho iidog, mii sa go apane gii-kiiwebatood. Haa mii sa i'iw.

Translation:

[1] All right, first of all I want to tell a little story about that Wenabozho. You see Wenabozho must have been up to something. He must have known everything too.

[2] One time he was sitting there—there where he lived. He was really thinking hard, "Maybe I'll walk around." Then he left walking around. Maybe there where he must have been they were playing baseball. Then he went in there where they were playing ball. Then one person must have invited him [to play], "Hey Wenabozho! Do you want to play baseball?" "You bet." So he must have played, playing baseball.

[3] So maybe during his turn he hits that ball way over there. He just stands there after he already hit it. But he smacked that ball way far over there. Then as he was running there, running fast, the Indians made a ruckus. "Haa Wenabozho! Home run. Home run," he must have been told. So Wenabozho ran home. That's it.[35]

35 Auginaush, Joe. "Gii-pakitejii'iged Wenabozho." Trans. Anton Treuer. *Living Our Language: Ojibwe Tales & Oral Histories*. St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2001. pp. 162-3.

Auginaush, by employing the dubitative constructions using the particle 'iidog' (which appends a “must have” or “maybe” to the sentence) challenges a simple present/past binary with regard to the temporal setting of the story. The events in the story did not *definitively* happen in an absolute past, but they *must have* happened, or *maybe* happened—either way the events in the story have a contingent relationship to the present, in the sense that the storyteller is conjecturing on what happened from his present position. Such a complex and unstable temporal relationship between teller and tale can hardly be said to create epic distance between the two, but rather freely mixes past and present (or perhaps rejects both) in way that is decidedly unlike the chronotope of either the epic or the novel. Although this use of the dubitative is by no means the way all aadizookaanag are told—most are in simple past tense—the presence of this form at all challenges the assertion that the aadizookaan is simply 'like' the epic. Moreover, as the modern subject of Auginaush’s story attests, the manidoog of the aadizookaanag are considered to still be present and alive on the earth. The continued presence of the manidoog in Ojibwe life is in direct contravention to Mikhail Bakhtin's observation that the epic world is “beyond the sphere of possible contact with the developing, incomplete and therefore re-thinking and re-evaluating present.”[36]

Making a distinction between the chronotopic conventions of the epic and the aadizookaanag may seem like minor point, but is vital to understanding why Beaulieu's reexpression of the aadizookaanag into the form of the novel, rather than the epic, carries a special ideological importance. Although the epic is a genre that is usually considered

36 Bakhtin, Mikhail Mikhailovich. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays.* University of Texas Press, 1981. p. 17.

one of the most explicitly nationalist genres, it offers a special challenge to the nascent indigenous nationalism beginning to be articulated by nineteenth-century Indian writers such as Beaulieu. As Bakhtin argues, the primary chronotopic effect of the epic is the creation of an "absolute epic distance" which "separates the epic world from contemporary reality."[37] In Europe, the creation and valorization of epics occurred after the nation achieved a state of coherence, so that the epic distance created between past and present is "filled with national tradition."[38] For the Ojibwe, a national (which, remember, also means *modern*) identity was still in the beginning stages of formation, and their traditions already seemed barbarously premodern to contemporary Euroamerican observers—such as the editorialist for the *Duluth Herald*. The problem of creating an Ojibwe epic was that, to a Euroamerican reader, there was no historical distance between the Ojibwe and the subjects of their stories, both were stuck in a pre-modern past. If Beaulieu's goal was to prove the Ojibwe's ability to adapt to modernity, the epic would have been a poor choice of genre through which to achieve his ends.

Indeed, Beaulieu had to overcome the fact that most of his non-Native readership would have already been deeply familiar with just such an epic translation of the aadizookaanag. As he explained in an introduction to his stories, "It is not only the Ojibwas who are familiar with the legend of Way-nah-bozho, but almost every school child in the United States has heard of it through Longfellow's poem of *Hiawatha*, and it was from this legend that the now famous poem originated." Had such Longfellow's poem aligned itself with Beaulieu's political aims, one would imagine that he could have

37 Ibid. p. 13.

38 Ibid. p. 14.

saved himself much effort by simply reproducing it in *The Progress*. However, Beaulieu explains his desire to present "the 'unadulterated' substance of which the legend was originally composed … ere its originality was corrupted by the brilliant fiction and romance of a recent civilization," a sentiment that can be read as a subtle, but damning, condemnation of Longfellow.[39]

The corruption Longfellow seems guilty of is that of recasting the aadizookaanag in the chronotope of the epic, setting the poem "In the days that are forgotten/In the unremembered ages."[40] As has been argued by multiple critics,[41] Henry Wadsworth Longfellow uses the chronotopic conventions of the epic to create an impermeable barrier between an Indian past and an American present, which bars any claims to contemporaneous indigenous existence.[42] Indeed, one need not tax the mind too heavily in order to see how Longfellow's epic version of the aadizookaanag aligns neatly with the settler-colonial ideology of Indians' inability to enter modernity. The poem famously ends with Hiawatha receiving two visions of the future. The first a triumphal image of Euroamerican modernity:

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39 Beaulieu, Theo. "The Ojibwas," *The Tomahawk*, 07 May 1903. p. 1.

40 Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth. *The Song of Hiawatha*. Ticknor and Fields, 1860. p. 31.

41 See: Roy Harvey Pearce, *Savagism and Civilization, pp.* 191-4*;* Joshua Bellin, *The Demon of the Continent,* pp. 171-87*,* Janet Lewis, *The Invasion,* pp. *226-7,* Kate Flint, *The Transatlantic Indian*, pp. 124-34, & Alan Trachtenberg, *The Shades of Hiawatha*, passim.

42 Here I wish to remind the reader of Bruyneel's formulation of settler colonialism's "temporal boundaries" that separate "an 'advancing' people and a 'static' people, locating the latter out of time." Bruyneel, Kevin. *The Third Space of Sovereignty*. U of Minnesota Press, 2007. p. 2.

I beheld the westward marches
Of the unknown, crowded nations.
All the land was full of people,
Restless, struggling, toiling, striving,
Speaking many tongues, yet feeling
But one heart-beat in their bosoms.[43]

The second, a warning of the bleak future facing those Indians who refuse to submit themselves to the authority of the white colonizers:

I beheld our nation scattered,
All forgetful of my counsels,
Weakened, warring with each other:
Saw the remnants of our people
Sweeping westward, wild and woful,
Like the cloud-rack of a tempest,
Like the withered leaves of Autumn![44]

Having presented these two possible futures, Hiawatha abdicates his authority as leader of his people, but not before exhorting his people to submit themselves to the white missionaries, telling them to "Listen to their words of wisdom/Listen to the truth they tell

43 Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth. *The Song of Hiawatha.* Boston: Ticknor and Fields. 1855. p. 283.

44 Ibid.

you,/For the Master of Life has sent them." The missionary brings European modernity with him from "the land of light and morning," giving him sovereign authority over the Indians (with Hiawatha's blessing, of course). Hiawatha leaves his people with the choice of either accepting the missionary's gifts (the "toiling" and "striving" of an Anglo-protestant economy) and incorporating themselves into the coming nation, or resigning themselves to the endless westward march of exile—figured here not as a forced military relocation, but as the inevitable and natural flight of "wild and woful" Indians away from labor and assimilation.

In this epic rendition of the aadizookaanag, Hiawatha's departure literally enacts the moment at which Indian sovereignty passes into irrecoverable history. The poem imagines a past pan-Indian nation held together by Hiawatha, which then collapses in the absence of his sovereign authority, so that actually-existing tribal nations can only represent a damaged, sectarian remnant. The true past of the Indian nation, Longfellow suggests, was one that looked remarkably similar to the one that happened to be expanding its colonial reach at the moment of the poem's composition: the U.S.—integrated, incorporative, and geographically expansive—a nation that made one out of many. The coming United States, still on the prophetic horizon in the poem's epic past, represents not the dissolution of tribal nationhood, but the glorious return of a lost continental nation.

By employing a novelistic form rather than the epic, Beaulieu's renditions of the aadizookaanag legitimize the national claims of the Ojibwe by offering an alternate figuration of temporality. The connection between the modern nation and the figuration of temporal simultaneity in literature is a familiar aspect of the study of nineteenth-

century literary nationalism in America and abroad, and applies equally well to Beaulieu's project in translating the aadizookaanag. Both the novel and the newspaper, as Benedict Anderson famously argues, worked in the nineteenth-century to solidify the emergent form of the nation through changing the conception of time in the popular imagination of their readers.[45] Both forms create a sense of simultaneity that allows far-flung persons to relate to one another across vast distances because they can imagine each other both moving through the same "homogenous, empty time"[46]—the time of clocks and calendars. Anderson argues that the novel does so by showing how many characters, situated in the same society, experience the same moment of time differently. The newspaper does the same on a larger scale, turning entire nations into characters whose stories are connected only by occurring on the same date.

What we have then, in the pages of *The Progress*, the temporal effect of both novel and the newspaper amplifying one another to create a sense of simultaneity, the "homogenous empty time" of modernity in which the nation comes to be. The stories themselves have become more modern—less alien to a Euroamerican reader and more foreign to an Ojibwe familiar with them in an oral form. Moreoever, unlike Longfellow's poem, Beaulieu's translations exist in an explicit relation to secular political time, setting

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45 Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London; New York: Verso, 1991. pp. 9-46.
Anderson's theory of print capitalism's production of the modern nation has come under critique for both the chicken-and-the-egg-like relationship between the print culture and nationhood (after all, one could argue that the temporality represented in the novel was the effect, and not the cause, of heightened nationalism) and for the very homogeneity of Anderson's idea of "empty homogenous time" (see Chatterjee's "Nation in Heterogenous Time" *Indian Economic Social History Review* 2001 38: 399). Neither of these critiques necessarily affect my reading of Beaulieu's stories, however, because I am describing Beaulieu's self-conscious attempt to emulate already existing forms of nationhood—not the spontaneous development of Ojibwe nationhood.

42 Anderson, Benedict. Passim.

his version of the stories in a time "when this country was occupied and owned exclusively by Indians."[47] Beaulieu defines the setting of his story through indigenous political claims, as it exists within the history of 'this country' (the nation) and not prior to it. The separation between the setting of his stories and the present is not the mythic distance of epic, but the political realities of colonization.

One can see the effort Beaulieu puts into constructing such a sense of simultaneity in his account of Wenabozho's confrontation with a monstrous whale that he believes killed his mother. After goading it into eating him, Wenabozho sets about to destroy the whale from the inside. He finds help in the form of a weasel who had been earlier devoured by the whale. Together, the two discover the exposed heart of the whale, and plan to attack it, but realize they must wait for the whale to get closer to shore before doing so. At this point in the story, Beaulieu uses complex hypotactic sentence structures in conjunction with shifts in narrative perspective to create a sense of simultaneous action that heightens the sense of suspense:

> After the whale had reached the shore he again proceeded to swallow water for the purpose of drowning Wainaboozhoo and then trowing [sic] him up, but at this time the weasel was busy biting and lacerating their victim's heartstrings, who soon ceased all efforts and in a little while, after a few convulsive flutters, lay still and dead.

47 Beaulieu, Theo. "The Ojibwas," *The Tomahawk*, 07 May 1903. p. 1.

> On the fourth day, after Wainahboozhoos [sic] departure, Nokomis arose early in the morning . . . she started in the direction of the shore. Here she was amazed to see a monster fish apparently dead and floating near the beach, on approaching nearer she was surprised and terrified to hear the sound of voices issueing [sic], as it were, from within the big fish. However, her fears were dispelled when she heard a well-known voice calling and instructing her to come and cut Me-she-nah-may-qway [the whale] open.[48]

In this passage, one can again see several ways in which Beaulieu situates events in a complex, novelistic manner. First, Beaulieu does not relate the actions of the characters in terms of discrete events. The whale does not simply swallow water, but *proceeds* to swallow water, allowing the action to continue in the mind of the reader even as the narrative vantage point moves back inside the whale, where the weasel is attacking the whale's heart *at the same time*. Secondly, one can see how Beaulieu uses hypotaxis to make the very language of the story perform the experience of time passing. As the whale dies, Beaulieu uses three different methods—the simple adverb "soon," adverbial use of the prepositional phrase "in a little while," and the subordinate clause "after a few convulsive flutters"—to draw out the death, both in the imagination of the reader as well as in the real time it takes the reader to scan the sentence. Lastly, Beaulieu uses a radical resituation of the narrative's point of view to Nookomis in order to create a sense that she

48 Beaulieu, Theo. "The Ojibwas, Part XI." *The Progress. 12 May 1888, p 1.*

is simultaneously experiencing the passage of time as the events inside the whale take place.[49]

Importantly, Beaulieu strategically refuses to fully conform the aadizookaan entirely to chronotopic conventions of the novel. Here it becomes important to remind the reader that Bakhtin's definition of the chronotope refers to both time *and space.* While Beaulieu's Wenabozho stories definitively take place in novelistic time, they take place in a distinctly Ojibwe space. Beaulieu retains many of the features of the traditional stories' ambiguous geographies—the island of giizhis manidoo, the land without sun, the realm of the North wind manidoo, the Gambler's den, the inside of the whale's stomach. These spaces are essential to the cultural meaning of the stories as they represent (except, perhaps, for the whale's stomach) important cosmological geographies. Had Beaulieu changed these settings to fit the more mimetic conventions of the novel, their cultural meaning would have been lost. In effect, the ideological power of Beaulieu's stories comes not from their ability to perfectly convey the aadizookaanag in a novelistic form, but in how they *fail* at this translation. This failure draws attention to the ways in which

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49 Compare the hypotaxis of Beaulieu's rendition of this moment to the extreme parataxis of a literal translation of an aadizookaanag version of the story:

> The fish began to feel sick to his stomach. He thought, "I guess I'll go to the shore and throw up Wenebojo." But Wenabojo knew what he was trying to do. He put his boat crosswise in the fish's throat, so the fish couldn't throw him up. *Mišinamégwe* tried another way. He wanted to move his bowels to get rid of Wenebojo. Wenebojo could see something at the other end of the wigwam [a visual metaphor for the whale's stomach] contracting and expanding. He knew that it was the fish's rectum, but he tied it up so tight that the fish couldn't do anything. Poor *Mišinamégwe* died from all this. Wenebojo killed him. Wenebojo, the squirrel, and the owl were beginning to get sick inside the fish. . . . Wenebojo said, "Let this fish land near my grandmother's shore." Sure enough, *Mišinamégwe* landed on Wenebojo's grandmother's shore. His grandmother ran to the shore. Wenebojo called to her to hurry up quick with the knife, because the insides of the fish were so hot that it was scalding them. She came with a knife and opened the fish, and they all got out.

Barnouw, Victor. *Wisconsin Myths and Tales: And their Relation to Chippewa Life.* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press. 1977. p. 78.

the non-indigenous literary form cannot adequately convey what is culturally important about the indigenous one—namely the Ojibwe's particular relationship to the land.[50]

The only major change Beaulieu does make to the stories' portrayal of space is a telling one. Unlike most aadizookaanag which begin with Wenabozho wandering out in the world, each episode of Wenabozho's adventure begins and ends in the same place: Nookomis's wigwam, a place that is repeatedly represented as comforting, safe and regenerative—Wenabozho's *home.* The constant circularity of Wenabozho's travels work in the stories to reinforce the rootedness of the stories in a particular landscape, a way of making the Ojibwe's claim to their land all the more distinct in the minds of Beaulieu's Euroamerican readers.

Beaulieu's insistence on conveying a modern time, but an Ojibwe space makes the stories a profound response to the threat of Dawes, which sought to radically alter Ojibwe experience of time by forcing the Ojibwe to change their relationship to the land. Instead, Beaulieu's stories create a sense of a modern, continuous Ojibwe presence over a landscape that is tied deeply and irrevocably to their cultural identity. This intense emphasis on the importance of the land is made clear in one particularly evocative moment, in which Wenabozho asks the trees to share with him their gifts in order to create his most prized possession:

> [Wenabozho] be-took himself to the woods where he held a council with the trees of the forest . . . it finally ended in the birch trees consenting to give

50 A point that will be important for my discussion of Vizenor's translation of the Ojibwe nagamonan (songs) in a later chapter.

some of their we-gwas (bark), which was part of their snow-white garments and lined with rich purple and gold; the majestic cedar tendered him a few fragrant splinters for the keel and ribs of his craft; the stately tamarac donated some of its wa-taub (strong durable rootlets) to lace it together, and the princely pine tree assured him that it would shed a few tears of pe-giew (gum) to cement the whole together, and make it water-proof.

In time the keel was laid, the light, feathery ribs were put in place and the white and gold colored robes of the queen of the forest was gracefully set about the corset and the wa-taub was made to gently clasp and lace them together while the tears of the pine—pe-giew—smoothed the creases. Thus, the first we-gwas-o-gee-mon, birch bark canoe, was finished; and a beauty it was too, the like of which none but Wainnahboozho and his descendants have ever succeeded to build to perfection.[51]

I quote here at length to show the great care Beaulieu takes in representing the importance of the natural world, and the reciprocal relationship it has with Ojibwe culture. In this story, the 'council' of trees take on a form of agentive manidoog, who have form a reciprocal, affective relationship with Wenabozho, whom they grant their gifts. One must keep in mind that the trees in this story are the very same as the ones the *Duluth Herald* editorialist has in mind when referring to the "thousands of acres of splendid timber" on Ojibwe land waiting to be claimed by whites. In this way it is easy to

51 Beaulieu, Theo. "The Ojibwas, Part IX." *The Progress. 24 March 1888, p 1.*

see how Beaulieu's stories were meant to counter such sentiments, to goad to his Euroamerican readers to imagine configurations of humanities' relationship to the land outside of those that reduced it to a mere resource to capitalize upon, to imagine a time

> when this country was one great reservation and … the vast prairies and forests whose portions swarmed with game of all kind, and no game law to guard against nor police courts to keep clear of; the rivers and lakes teemed with fishes and every tree in the forest bore abundantly of fruits of all kinds and apples wan't [sic] worth 5 cts apiece either…[52]

Ultimately, through imperfectly re-interpreting the aadizookaanag into a more novelistic form that Beaulieu could work toward his political goals of Ojibwe survivance and sovereignty, mediating Ojibwe cultural practices and Euroamerican expectations and prejudices concerning the Ojibwe people. Beaulieu actively reconstitutes the tribal past in the national present by interpreting the oral tradition *in* a written literary form, as opposed to translating the oral tradition *as* a written literary form (a distinction I will take up later on in this dissertation). By telling his versions of the aadizookaanag in novelistic time but in the space of the aadizookaan, Beaulieu made two different arguments to his two very different audiences. However, in order to address both, Beaulieu had radically transformed the aadizookaan at the most basic levels of form and structure. By presenting the traditions and stories of the Ojibwe in a narrative form recognizable, but still residually foreign, to an Euroamerican readership and perhaps equally foreign to those

52 Beaulieu, Theo. "Indian Traditions and Legends," *The Progress,* 22 October 1887, p 1.

Ojibwe familiar with the oral versions of the stories, Beaulieu's texts operate in a mediative discourse that would upset the cultural expectations of both groups.[53]

It is precisely this aspect of *The Progress* that makes it an important document for the those interested in the history of indigenous literatures: it offers us insight into a specific historical moment when a Native writer first adopted (and adapted) the form of the novel in order to express 'traditional' tribal culture. The status of the novel, as a mode of expression for Native people, has been particularly contentious among scholars of Native American literature. Elvira Pulitano, following the late Louis Owens, argues that the novel is "a genre rising out of social conditions antithetical to whatever we might consider 'traditional' Native American oral cultures."[54] Jace Weaver, quoting his own words, argues against this position, stating:

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53 As James Ruppert argues, mediation in contemporary Native literature is a product of writing to multiple audiences—both Native and non-Native—simultaneously, a process which, by necessity, forces both implied readerships to renegotiate their relationship to each other:

> As the reader's language is translated, his or her self-conception and cultural code become translated; conceptions of Native and Western discourse and identity are then seen through someone else's system. The implied Native reader sees through the non-Native; the implied non-Native reader sees through the Native. … An implied reader of the mediational text must conclude by the end of a text that his or her understanding is complete and adequate even though it has been challenged and is now altered. In that sense, the Otherness has been illusory. The mediational world of the text may supply a place to assimilate the Other where the physical world may not. However it is not a world divorced from the political realities of contemporary Native American experience…A mediational text attempts to maneuver readers into taking a series of regenerated socio-political positions. An ideological translation takes place, though not a physical transmutation, but, real readers may be ready to act because they perceive things differently.

Ruppert, James. *Mediation in Contemporary Native American Fiction.* Norman: University of Oklahoma Press. 1995. p. 15

54 Qtd. in Womack, Craig. "The Integrity of American Indian Claims," *American Indian Literary Nationalism*. Eds. Warrior, Weaver & Womack. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006, p. 117.

> While there are those who would like to argue that works written in English (for example) in a form like the novel for publication are something apart from Native American literature, for me the answer is manifest: "there is something still 'Indian' about it regardless of its form or the language it speaks."[55]

Both of these positions, to my mind, risk ignoring a potentially rich approach to the study of indigenous literatures. The novel is a non-indigenous technology for the Ojibwe, and like all such technologies, has a particular history of adoption and accommodation. Being a specific kind of expressive technology, the novel simply does things that other genres, like the aadizookaanag, do not. This isn't to say that the novel is a less 'authentic' mode of address for the Ojibwe (no more than using a steel axe to cut down a tree is less authentic than using one made of stone), but neither would I want to argue that its adoption didn't require a certain amount of change on the part of those who embraced it. By either rejecting the novel as a non-Native imposition or embracing it unproblematically as a natural form of indigenous self-expression, critics risk effacing the history of the novel's adoption in Indian Country altogether, a history which—as the example of *The Progress* shows—can offer us a fascinating insights into the cultural politics of Native nationhood.

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55 Weaver, Jace. "Splitting the Earth." *American Indian Literary Nationalism*. Eds. Warrior, Weaver & Womack. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006, p. 32.

A Revolutionary Legacy

Unfortunately, Theo Beaulieus' efforts to resist the Nelson Act proved unsuccessful. Despite their best efforts, public pressure to allot Ojibwe land only intensified as the years advanced. Theo Beaulieu, increasingly involved with the legal battle over the implementation of the Nelson Act at White Earth, had less and less time to devote to the newspaper. By the spring of 1889, Beaulieu's coverage of local issues in *The Progress* all but disappeared—replaced for the most part by curious or scandalous stories hastily reprinted from popular magazines. After U.S. Senator Knute Nelson established an official commission to broker the terms of allotment with Ojibwe leaders at White Earth in June of 1889, Theo Beaulieu suspended publication altogether, devoting himself instead to acting as an advocate for the Ojibwe in the upcoming negotiations. The last issue of *The Progress* was published on July 13, 1889 with a desultory apology: "[W]e beg our friends and patrons to please be patient with us until such time as we are again enabled to avail ourselves of your kind and generous courtesy."[56]

Such a time would never come. By the end of 1889, the Nelson Commission was able to successfully negotiate a settlement to allot White Earth, sparking a quick succession of events that would ultimately lead to the majority of reservation's land base slipping away from Ojibwe control. The process of allotting White Earth, once began, proved to be driven by the very interests Beaulieu had hoped allotment would hold back: timber conglomerates and white settlers. Contrary to the wording of the Nelson Act,

56 Beaulieu, Theo. "Announcement." *The Progress,* 13 July 1889. p. 4.

allotments were half as large as those promised in the Treaty of 1867 (only 80 acres), and issues of illegal taxation reared their head almost immediately. The most damning event of all, however, was Congress's passage of the Clapp rider, a small piece of legislation quietly appended to an unrelated bill in 1906. The Clapp rider threw out the protection against alienation as guaranteed in the Nelson Act and the Treaty of 1867, allowing so-called 'mixed bloods' to sell their allotments to any interested party without interference—leading to a rash of fraud, abuse, and outright theft that would grip White Earth for decades.[57]

Theo Beaulieu would never again have a public platform for his work as accessible and unrestricted as *The Progress,* but continued to advocate on behalf of the rights of the White Earth Ojibwe for the rest of his life*,* giving speeches, writing editorials, and representing the legal interests of the Minnesota Ojibwe. Through this work, Beaulieu continued to impress upon non-Natives the ability of the Ojibwe to be the intellectual and cultural equals of their Euroamerican neighbors—with some amount of success. Upon hearing Beaulieu give a speech on Ojibwe history in 1914, a reporter for the New Ulm Review described Theo as "a man of striking appearance and convincing personality," who "left little doubt in the minds of his hearers that his is a mind the equal of that of his white brothers of more than ordinary ability."[58] A writer for the St. Paul Globe described Beaulieu as "author, orator, diplomat, adroit politician, traveler, the

57 Meyers, Melissa. *The White Earth Tragedy: Ethnicity and Dispossession at a Minnesota Anishinaabe Reservation.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press. 1994. Passim.

58 "Chippewa Indian Chief is Honored by Men he Protected." *New Ulm Review,* 26 August 1914, p. 1.

product of a civilization that has no recognized place for him."[59] In recognition for his life long efforts, the editor of *The Progress's* spiritual successor, *The Tomahawk,* gave Theo the fond honorific of "the Demosthenes of White Earth."[60] Theo Beaulieu even served as the vice president of the Society of American Indians before passing away in 1924 at the age of 72. Eventually, however, both the remarkable newspaper and its equally remarkable editor lapsed into obscurity.

That would change in 1965, when a journalism student from the University of Minnesota discovered *The Progress,* by chance, after a reference librarian at the Minnesota Historical Society suggested that he, as an Indian, might find the newspaper of interest. [61] Reading through the newspaper, a young Gerald Vizenor found himself "transformed, inspired, and excited by a great and lasting source of native literary presence and survivance."[62] What likely drew Vizenor's attention the most on that afternoon, however, "was a flavor of iconoclasm in many of these critical reports and editorials appearing on the front page."[63] Vizenor acknowledges the importance of *The Progress* to his career by explaining that his first encounter with the paper "provided a privy trace of assurance to consider a career as a writer"[64] in a pre-Renaissance era in which the idea of contemporary Native writing was almost unthinkable.

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59 "White Earth Reds Hold Grand Pow Wow." *Saint Paul Globe,* 21 June 1903, p. 28.

60 "Local and Personal." *The Tomahawk,* 16 April 1903, p. 4.

61 Vizenor, Gerald. *A Brief Historical Study and General Content Description of a Newspaper Published on the White Earth Indian Reservation in Becker County, Minnesota*, 1965.

62 Vizenor, Gerald. *Native Liberty: Natural Reason and Cultural Survivance* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 36.

63 Vizenor, *A Brief Historical Study*, 27.

64 Vizenor, *Native Liberty*, 36.

Indeed, to a modern critic, it is difficult not to see echoes of *The Progress* throughout Vizenor's work. Examining Theo Beaulieu's editorials, one notices early articulations of themes that would come to be the hallmarks of Vizenor's own writing—the anti-establishment sensibility, the play of language, and the rejection of imposed discourses of Indianness. In Beaulieu's imperfect, politically motivated translations of aadizookaanag, Vizenor found what he would eventually call a "new tribal hermeneutics"[65] —a way of using material from the Ojibwe oral tradition as a means of anti-colonial resistance, by transforming traditional stories and songs into critiques of contemporary politics by translating them. *The Progress* would become critically important to Vizenor, not just for his own translations of Ojibwe dream songs (as I discuss in depth in chapter 3 of this dissertation), but over a long career as one of the most important Native American writers and thinkers of the twentieth century. After leafing through the delicate pages of *The Progress* for a time on that day in 1965, the young Vizenor "looked around the reference room that afternoon for someone to convince that *The Progress* was absolutely revolutionary."[66]

Nowhere would legacy of *The Progress* prove more influential than in Vizenor's drafting, four decades later, of a new constitution for the White Earth Nation. Written over a period of several years by Vizenor (in consultation with a team of advisors) the White Earth Constitution has been hailed as a revolutionary document in the history of tribal government. As the Abenaki critic Lisa Brooks argues, the White Earth Nation

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65 Vizenor, Gerald. *Summer in the Spring: Anishinaabe Lyric Poems and Stories, New Edition*. University of Oklahoma Press, 1993. p. 13.

66 Vizenor, Gerald. *Native Liberty: Natural Reason and Cultural Survivance*. University of Nebraska Press. 2009. p. 42.

constitution offers "a model that may become tradition among Native nations and organizations in the twenty-first century"[67] in its formal recognition of kinship-based affiliation, as well as its creation of "spaces for participatory deliberation and interpretation among its citizens"[68] in the form of deliberative councils open to public participation. The constitution, ratified in 2009 and overwhelmingly approved by the enrolled members of White Earth in a 2013 referendum, is the intellectual inheritor of Beaulieu's advocacy, a debt Vizenor readily acknowledges:

> Theodore Beaulieu clearly demonstrated by his resistance and determination the need for a democratic constitutional government on the White Earth Reservation. The editorial dedication of *The Progress* inspired, in a sense, the sentiments of Native survivance and the ratification more than a century later of the Constitution of the White Earth Nation. [69]

Like Beaulieu, Vizenor takes historical Ojibwe traditions (in this case clan-based citizenship rights and participatory, consensus oriented decision making) and transforms

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67 Brooks, Lisa. "The Constitution of the White Earth Nation: A New Innovation in a Longstanding Indigenous Literary Tradition." *Studies in American Indian Literatures.* Vol. 23, no. 4. Winter, 2011. p. 71.

68 Brooks, p. 64.

69 Vizenor, Gerald. "Constitutional Consent." *The White Earth Nation: Ratification of a Native Democratic Constitution.* Ed. Vizenor and Doerfleur. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press. 2012. p. 42. The effect of the Beaulieus on aspects of the constitution goes beyond simple inspiration, and into the practical rights of citizens. Indeed, in the chapter articulating the rights of its Citizens, the Constitution of White Earth establishes two important principles that can be read as an explicit nod to the Beaulieus and the history of *The Progress*: Article 5 protects the "freedom of thought and conscience, academic, artistic irony, and literary expression" for all future Ojibwe of White Earth, while Article 16 declares that "Citizens shall never be banished from the White Earth Nation."

them into something recognizably modern. The result is the realization of Beaulieu's vision for White Earth first articulated over a century ago, a vision of an Ojibwe nation moving forward into the future.

2 - Englishman, Your Color is Deceitful

> *The effect of the practice of speaking for others is often, though not always, erasure and a reinscription of sexual, national, and other kinds of hierarchies. … But this development should not be taken as an absolute de-authorization of all practices of speaking for. It is not* always *the case that when others unlike me speak for me I have ended up worse off.*
>
> —Linda Martín Alcoff, "The Problem of Speaking for Others"

> *Hello … I'm representing Marlon Brando this evening.*
>
> —Sacheen Littlefeather

The first written mention of the Ojibwe by a white person comes from that venerable work of proto-ethnography and colonial fundraising, the *Jesuit Relations,* in 1640. Under the heading "Of the Hope We Have for the Conversion of Many Savages" (which, despite its auspicious title, is little more than a list of Indian tribes the Jesuits have heard about) Father Superior Paul le Jeune briefly mentions the Baouichtigouian: "that is to say… the nation of the people of the Sault, for, in fact, there is a Rapid, which rushes at this point into the fresh-water sea."[1] The Baawitig, or rapids, had been an historically important fishing grounds and summer meeting camp for the Ojibwe for centuries. According to many versions of their oral histories, the Baawitig was the first home of the Ojibwe after founding the Anishinaabe confederacy with the Ottawa and

1 le Jeune, Father Jean Paul. "Of the Hope We Have for the Conversion of Many Savages." in *The Jesuit relations and allied documents.* ed. by Reuben Gold Thwaites. Cleveland: Burrows Bros. Co., 1896-1901. Vol. 18, p. 231.

Potawatomi on the nearby island of Michilimackinac a few centuries before the Jesuits made their first appearance.[2] Centrally located at the confluence of Lakes Superior and Huron, the Baawitig that offered the Ojibwe easy canoe access to the multiple river tributaries and vast hunting territories adjoining the lakes. As French *voyageurs* and *coureur des bois* increasingly came to rely on the Ojibwe villages at Baawitig they gave the rapids the name they carry today: Sault Ste. Marie—or, simply, the "Soo." As the area underwent successive waves of French, British, and American colonization over the next three centuries, the Sault would become the primary site where Euroamericans would interact with the people they variously called Sauteurs, Saulteaux, Ottawa, Potowattomie, Outchibouec, Otchiptway, Ojibbeway, Chippewa, or simply Indians.[3]

By the end of the 19th century, the area around the Sault (now the northern portion of Michigan) had been utterly transformed. Industrial scale mining operations had produced a huge influx of immigrant-labor—flooding the area with white settlers. The emergence of the urban centers of Chicago and Detroit required a vast amount of timber, a demand met in part by clear cutting most of the old-growth forests of Michigan. The flow of mineral and timber wealth from the west necessitated the rivers connecting the Great Lakes be reengineered. To do so, giant mechanical locks were put in place that allowed huge cargo vessels move freely between the Great Lakes, U.S., and international markets unimpeded. Farms sprang up in the areas recently cleared by logging. Railroad

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2 Warren, William W. *History of the Ojibway People*. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2009.

3 White, Richard. *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991. pp. 94-141.

companies, competing with one another to transport goods and people, crisscrossed the state with tracks.[4]

Alongside the radical industrial transformation taking place in northern Michigan, came another major shift: a boom in the sale of lakefront property. The buyers were upper and middle class families from urban areas (such as Chicago) who sought out the cooler temperatures and recreation offered by the north woods. This literal cottage industry drew thousands by promising clean air, vigorous activity, and an escape from the increasing complexity of urban life. One 1895 article published in the *New York Observer and Chronicle* promoted Mackinac Island for its ability to "drive out of the system ... that nervous depression that characterizes brain workers."[5] The woods and lakes of upper Michigan gave countless lawyers, bankers, doctors and professors the opportunity to abandon their sedentary and urbane identities to become fishermen, hunters and farmers—at least as long as the summer months lasted. In the hundreds of advertisements that crowded one another in Chicago newspapers, realtors and resort owners played up the image of upper Michigan as the last remnant of the old frontier, a place of vigor and plenty (Fig. 2).

The large scale industrial and recreational transformation of Upper Michigan was made possible largely by two treaties, the 1836 Treaty of Washington and the 1855 Treaty of Detroit. In the 1836 treaty, the Ojibwe and Odawa ceded most of the land of Upper Michigan to the U.S.—save for a few reservations. The 1855 treaty split these

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4 Dunbar, Willis F., and George S. May. *Michigan: A History of the Wolverine State*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1995. pp. 338-380.

5 Steele, R. H. "A Michigan Summer Resort." *New York Observer and Chronicle.* 73:39. September 26, 1895. p. 414.

Fig. 2 - Resort advertisements (including one for O-Non-E-Gwud Inn) from the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Jun. 25, 1911.

remaining land holdings into private allotments and terminated the Ojibwe and Odawa as political bodies. Without land, political representation, or federal protections, the Ojibwe of Upper Michigan quickly fell into poverty. This burden was compounded by lingering Euroamerican racism. Although the Ojibwe at the Sault were no longer considered Indians in a political sense, they remained racially marked as non-white—barring them from certain kinds of employment and political enfranchisement. By the early 20th century, many of the Ojibwe in Upper Michigan eked out a meager existence through a combination of subsistence, farming, and menial labor as lumbermen or domestics at resorts that bore Ojibwe names.

Out of this milieu emerged two Euroamerican writers—one famous, one forgotten—whose lives and work would be profoundly shaped by the region and its indigenous people. The similarities between the biographies of Janet Lewis and Ernest Hemingway are astounding. Both were born in 1899 to professional, middle-class families—Lewis's father was professor, Hemingway's a physician. Both were raised in the tony Chicago suburb of Oak Park, where they were high school classmates. Both moved to France shortly after the first World War—although Lewis's time in Paris would be far more brief than Hemingway's. Both would make important contributions to the developing stylistic revolution of literary modernism, with Lewis developing a poetics that merged imagism and ethnography, and Hemingway establishing his distinctive, laconic prose style. Importantly, both also spent their childhood summers in northern Michigan—Hemingway at his family's cabin on Walloon Lake and Lewis 75 miles to the northeast on a small island in the Saint Mary's River—where both would come to know

Ojibwe people, developing relationships that would arguably define their identities and careers as writers.

Indeed, the earliest writings of both Hemingway and Lewis reveal a fascination with the Ojibwe. Two of Hemingway's first published stories, "Judgment of Manitou" (1917) and "Sepi Jingan" (1916) are about the rough, masculine lives of Indian hunters and trappers and were based on the Ojibwe he met at Walloon lake.[6] Janet Lewis's first collection of poems, *The Indians in the Woods* (1922), freely mixed imagist impressions of the Michigan landscape with portraits of Wenabozho, Nokomis and other figures from the cosmology of the Ojibwe, about whom she had heard from her Indian acquaintances.[7] In both cases, the writers present the Indian as something exotically different from the humdrum urbanity of Oak Park. For Hemingway, the Ojibwe represented a life of adventure and high drama. In Lewis's poetry, the Ojibwe represented the intrinsic nobility of a primitive life, in tune with the natural world. In both cases, this youthful fixation on the Indian was largely a product of the resort culture of upper Michigan. In the earliest years of the twentieth century, just as they found escape from their frenetic lives on the cool shores of the Great Lakes, Americans like Hemingway and Lewis began to look toward Indians as a model of existence "outside the temporal (and societal) boundaries of modernity."[8] Both of Hemingway's high school stories are about Indians

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6 These stories are reprinted in Cappel, Constance. *Hemingway in Michigan.* New York: Fleet Pub. Corp., 1966. pp. 44-5, 50-2.

7 It may be of interest that Lewis's publisher, Monroe Wheeler, published *Indians in the Woods* as a part of a three-volume set that included William Carlos William's *Go Go* and Marriane Moore's *Marriage*—showing the degree of Lewis's recognition among her contemporaries, as well as her historical importance as a modernist poet. Lewis, Janet. *The Indians in the Woods.* Bonn, Germany: Mannikin Press, 1922.

8 Deloria, Philip Joseph. *Playing Indian*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998. p. 103.

engaging in extra-legal murder for the sake of justice and revenge, placing them well outside the bounds of social order. Lewis's poems, in their fixation on Ojibwe subsistence practices juxtaposed against the images of the natural landscape, create an image of idyllic pre-industrial life.[9] Like the resorters who claimed ownership over land they occupied only one season out of the year, Hemingway and Lewis laid claim to Indianness as their own literary possession.

If this critical account of Hemingway and Lewis's appropriation of Ojibwe material seems at all familiar—and it should—it is because in this project of literary settler colonialism, they are hardly alone. James Cox, a non-Native critic, argues that the "domination of the land and people is a prevailing community value in non-Native storytelling traditions" (204).[10] For Cox, "Novels by European American authors constitute an almost unbroken assault on Native identity, family, community, and sovereignty" (236). Despite the wide temporal, ideological or cultural differences among Euroamerican novelists, Cox sees their politics in regard to indigenous people as fundamentally similar:

> The will to dominate and the expectation of eventual conquest [. . .] overwhelms this diversity of experiences and perspective. In spite of the many different

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9 Positioning the Indian as a figure outside of modernity presented its own kind of complications, however, requiring white Americans like Lewis and Hemingway to find "ways to preserve the integrity of the boundaries that marked exterior and authentic Indians, while gaining access to organic Indian purity in order to make it one's own" (Deloria 115). Just as tourists had to purposefully ignore the extensive industrial economy of northern Michigan in order to imagine it as a natural, wild place; Lewis and Hemingway had to ignore the aspects of contemporary Ojibwe life that did not conform to the image of the Indian as the locus of the authentically primitive.

10 Cox, James H. *Muting White Noise: Native American and European American Novel Traditions*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006.

> religious, national, and socioeconomic origins of European American novelists, as well as the influence of an author's gender on textual production and publication, their plots proceed inexorably toward the absence of Native individuals and communities from the landscape. (207)

Cox's conclusions are but an overt articulation of an otherwise implicit assumption that runs throughout the discipline of Native American Studies as a whole: that when Euroamericans depict Native people in an imaginative way, their work inevitably reinforces the settler colonial project of undermining indigenous sovereignty and advancing the dispossession of Native lands. When compared to any number of other white authors' imperious appropriations and degrading stereotypes, Hemingway and Lewis's works seem no different.[11]

But is it always so? Are all literary representations of Native people by Euroamericans inherently damaging to the cause of Native self-government? Is it the inherent nature of Euroamerican story-telling (as Cox claims) to imagine the act of indigenous disappearance at the heart of settler colonial ideology? It is my purpose in this chapter to identify the existence of a body of work one might call unsettled literature—that is, writing by a self-identified settler that attempts to articulate a critique of settler colonial ideology and imagine the potential for the recognition of indigenous claims to nationhood—reading Janet Lewis's *The Invasion* (1932) as a potential model. Published ten years after *Indians in the Woods*, Janet Lewis takes up the Ojibwe as a subject once

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11 Even though Lewis and Hemingway wrote poems and short stories, and not novels, Cox's analysis still seems to apply.

again, this time producing a compelling account of the Ojibwe's struggle to survive the onslaught of Euroamerican settlement. Unlike the naïve appropriation of Ojibwe cultural material in her earlier poetry (which she would later dismiss as a "silly" attempt to emulate Yeats),[12] I believe *The Invasion* represents an attempt on the part of Lewis to reject settler privilege and recognize the legitimacy of Ojibwe nationhood. Like Theo Beaulieu four decades previously, Lewis presents material from the Ojibwe oral tradition in the form of the novel—in this case, the historical novel—in order to present an image of the Ojibwe as a modern people. As with Beaulieu's stories, however, *The Invasion* does not fully embrace the formal qualities of the novel. Instead, I see *The Invasion's* ambivalent relation to novelistic form as reflecting an attempt to recognize the legitimacy of Ojibwe oral history without domesticating it. I will tie this process of recognition to the larger project of the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, in which tribes that had been previously 'extinguished' by treaty could regain recognition as nations by narrating their historical experience of colonization and survival. I will conclude the chapter by reflecting on the potential for reading *The Invasion* as a work of Ojibwe nationalism, despite Lewis's lack of Ojibwe identity, and reflect upon the implications of unsettled literature for Native American literary studies.

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12 Carnochan, Brigitte Hoy. "Interview with Janet Lewis." Unpublished transcript. Brigitte Hoy Carnochan Papers relating to research on Janet Lewis. Box 4, folders 23 & 26. np. Stanford University Library Archives.

Stuck with history

In 1899 Edwin Herbert Lewis bought a small lake lot on Neebish island (near Sault Ste. Marie) from a woman named Anna Maria (Molly) Johnstone. Molly Johnstone was once the owner and proprietor of the popular O-Non-E-Gwud[13] resort, but found the work of caretaker for a large inn and resort too exhausting as she approached her late fifties. She hoped to secure her future by retaining the inn, but selling the resort's lake lots and cabins to resorters who wanted to own permanent vacation homes on the St. Mary's River. Lewis, a professor of English at the Lewis Institute in Chicago, had summered in the area before, had grown enamored of it, and sought out a place to bring his family, including his infant daughter Janet, for their summer vacations.

During her next twenty summers at Neebish, Janet Lewis would spend hours with Molly, who would look after the children of resorters while they engaged in their recreation. According to her own account, Lewis adored the reserved, soft-spoken woman, whom she affectionately referred to as 'Miss Molly' (she had never married). Lewis's parents also formed a friendship with Molly, as well as her younger brother Howard, with whom they often gathered in the evenings to share stories around a bonfire. After contracting tuberculosis, Janet Lewis was sent to Sunmount sanatorium in Taos, New Mexico. While there, Lewis would hear of Molly Johnstone's death in 1928. Lewis set out to memorialize her friend in a short sketch, a seemingly small project to occupy her time at Sunmount, but would consume Lewis's attention for nearly half a decade. As

13 The name, O-Non-E-Gwud [Onaanigwad] is an Eastern Ojibwemowin verb meaning "Rejoice."

Lewis states in an interview, after beginning to write, she soon realized "I was in over my head really, and found myself stuck with history."[14]

The history which Lewis found so troublesome was that which accounted for Molly Johnstone's identity. Molly was an Ojibwe, but one that poorly conformed to popular expectations of what an Indian should be. Molly was unlike the destitute Indians who Lewis sometimes saw sailing between the lakes looking for work, neither did she much resemble the ennobled primitivism of Indians in popular historical imagination. Instead, Molly Johnstone was thoroughly modern, having achieved a degree of economic success, and living in a manner that reflected the social norms of a petit-bourgeoisie. Molly was proud of aristocratic Scotch-Irish lineage, inherited from her grandfather, whose large portrait hung above her mantle. However, despite the deep racism of the era, she was even more proud of her Indian heritage. She often recited her descent from the illustrious ogimaag Waubojiig, the White Fisher, famous for driving the Sioux from western tributaries of Lake Superior in the 18th century. Moreover, Molly and her brother spoke Ojibwemowin fluently, recreationally participated in the seasonal subsistence round, and freely associated with the other Indians in the area. She and her brother Howard had a compendious knowledge of the Ojibwe oral tradition, as well as local history, which they frequently shared with the Lewises during their summer campfires. As Lewis recalls, "[The Johnstones] were very proud of their inheritance," which meant "living peacefully on the shores of their own river on their own land."[15]

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14 Carnochan papers, np.

15 Ibid.

For a population of Euroamericans (the resorters of northern Michigan) invested in placing Indians outside of the temporal and social boundaries of modernity, a figure like Molly Johnstone presented a serious challenge. Indeed, she seems to have caused a degree of vertiginous uncertainty, even among the Euroamericans who knew her well. As Lewis recalls, a neighbor of the Johnstones once casually remarked to her: "They aren't Indian," adding, after a moment of reflection, "But of course they're Indian."[16] In attempting to write a biography of Molly, Lewis was being confronted with a history that settler society had conditioned her to ignore. Familiar historical narratives of Indian disappearance, backwardness and assimilation simply could not account for the existence of a woman like Molly Johnstone.

Telling Molly Johnstone's story would require Janet Lewis to reconsider the normative historical narratives of U.S. expansion and settlement instead of taking them for granted. Returning to her new home in Palo Alto (where her husband, the critic Yvor Winters was teaching), Lewis launched a massive historical investigation of the Sault. She enlisted the aid of Chase Osborn, the former governor of Michigan, who gave her access to a huge archive of historical, ethnographic and journalistic texts housed in Michigan's various libraries, universities and museums. Her father sent her records and materials from Chicago, in addition to his own writings about the Johnstones and the Sault. Lewis also reached out to Molly's surviving brothers, William and Howard

16 Ibid.

Johnstone, from whom she received written versions of the oral history of the Johnstone family.[17]

The resulting book, *The Invasion* (1932), announces its project in its provocative title: to employ the history of the Johnstone family as a way of offering critical account of the settler invasion of upper Michigan—from the earliest days of Euroamerican contact to the present day (1928). Lewis gives this account largely from the perspective of the Ojibwe themselves, as their political power and social coherence both deteriorate under the pressure of a century and a half of Euroamerican contact. What makes *The Invasion* exceptional is Lewis's investment in critiquing the effects of settlement not only in the past, *but also in the present day*—explicitly finding continuity between the historical dispossession of the Ojibwe with their contemporary situation. In her representation of the history of Ojibwe/Euroamerican relations, Lewis narratively illustrates a concept articulated by Patrick Wolfe fifty years later: that "invasion is a structure and not an event."[18] *The Invasion*, I believe, should be read as a sustained critique of settler colonialism as both a historical process and an ideology that persists into the present day. In rejecting settler colonial ideology, Lewis shows the potential for the recognition of Ojibwe nationhood and sovereignty—even at a historical moment when the Michigan Ojibwe had been without formal recognition as a nation for nearly a century. Lewis accomplishes this by instantiating a sense of historical Ojibwe sovereignty and making it comparable with that of Euroamerican nations—and therefore recognizable. She also

17 Importantly, when the written accounts (almost all of which were produced by Euroamericans) contradicted the family's version of historical events, Lewis privileged the oral history as more accurate. (Carnochan papers)

18 Wolfe, Patrick. *Settler Colonialism*. Continuum International Publishing Group, 1999. p. 163.

shows how settler colonial dispossession was not the inevitable, naturalized outcome of Euroamerican-Native contact, representing it to be rather a product of a particular ideology driven by capitalist interests and buttressed by racism. Lewis goes on to show how the hegemony of settler colonial thought can be disrupted and even rejected by settlers, through the process of confronting the illegitimacy of their own settler privilege, acknowledging their complicity in the history of indigenous dispossession, and recognizing contemporary indigenous political rights.

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When Harcourt published *The Invasion,* it chose to promote it as a novel of pioneer history, in the vein of Willa Cather and Elizabeth Madox Roberts. Early reviewers reacted to the book with mild praise and pronounced confusion. The *New York Times* described the book as "a curious combination of a genealogical compendium and descriptive writing of a cool, translucent beauty."[19] A reviewer from the American Library Association suggested *The Invasion* was "of limited appeal as a novel, but a fine example of regional history." Another reviewer from *Bookman* magazine admitted that "no rough and ready classification" existed for *The Invasion,* but ultimately commended Harcourt, who "wisely decided to issue it as a […] novel."[20] A reviewer for *The Nation* praised *The Invasion* as "an exceptional achievement"—only to demure—"as a history rather than a novel."[21]

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19 Chamberlain, John. "A Chronicle of the Old Northwest: THE INVASION. By Janet Lewis." New York Times. Oct 2, 1932. pg. BR7.

20 Brande, Dorothea. "Four New Novelists." *The Bookman*. 75:5, Sep 1932. pg. 518

The difficulty the reviewers had in understanding the genre of *The Invasion* was due, in no small part, to the curious interplay of its style and scope. Accurately relating the events of nearly a century and a half in a linear fashion, the epic scale of *The Invasion* suggests it be read as history. Yet, Lewis's subject is decidedly more intimate, reducing events of historical importance to an indistinct background against which she presents a study of the domestic lives of multiple generations of the same family—Molly Johnstone's family. While such an intimately domestic setting would indicate the book's affinity with the novel, Lewis's style, characterization, and plotting resist any such affiliation. Lewis employs dialogue only rarely and offers the barest glimpses into the minds of her characters. The characters themselves fall into the story only to drop out in a disorienting fashion. The narrative point of view shifts, sometimes wildly, between characters—oftentimes on the same page. No one who could be described as a protagonist ever really emerges from the story. Through it all, Lewis maintains a tone of controlled, objective disinterest—relating skirmishes and soirées in what one reviewer describes as a "low monotone."[22] For her part, Lewis is insistent that *The Invasion* not be read as a novel or history, as she (somewhat confusingly) explains: "*The Invasion*…is not a novel. Harcourt called it a novel because novels are what they publish. But it is a fiction, called 'in the manner of fiction,' but in it I think I invented practically nothing."[23] Instead, Lewis claims that *The Invasion* occupies an ambiguous third category between

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21 Zabel, Morton Dauwel. "The Northwest Passage." *The Nation.* 135:3517, Nov. 30, 1932. pp. 537-8.

22 Butcher, Fanny. "Janet Lewis Pens Epic of Soo Country." *Chicago Daily Tribune.* Sep. 15, 1932. p. 13.

23 Carnochan papers, np.

history and fiction, calling the book a "narrative," one based upon the "personal legends of the Johnstone family."[24]

In an overly-reductive analysis, *The Invasion* seems to fall somewhere within a nexus of generic styles that have been brought under the sign of historical romance. *The Invasion* shares many of its superficial generic conventions with a particular kind of historical romance identified by contemporary critics as the domestic frontier romance, a combination of the two most popular forms of 19th century fiction: the frontier romance and the domestic novel.[25] As Ezra Tawil points out, domestic frontier romances, such as Lydia Maria Child's *Hobomok,* and Catherine Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie,* used the frontier domestic space as a site in which the idea of racialized citizenship was articulated through allegories of failed attempts to form kin relations between white women and non-white men—most often Indians. In these works, Tawil aruges, "by telling the story of the English woman who crossed over into Indian culture and yet remained white" authors like Child and Sedgwick "provided the conditions of possibility of an Anglo-Saxonist nationalism and the fateful articulation of race and nation." [26]

Lewis, too, is interested in the production of racialized identities in the antebellum frontier of the U.S., but her project is not to naturalize, but to expose racialization as historical process driven by colonial interests. She does this by extending the frontier

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24 Ibid.

25 The frontier romance, exemplified by Cooper's *Leatherstocking*, illustrated positive masculine virtues of self-reliance, while reflecting a heroic vision of imperialism as rejuvenating violence. Domestic fiction also served to imagine the nation as home, with an equally heroic representation of the ideal woman as a force that civilized the home-as-nation, while drawing distinct boundaries of citizenship through the allegorical representation of kinship.

26 Tawil, Ezra. "Domestic Frontier Romance, or, How the Sentimental Heroine Became White." *Novel* Vol. 32, no. 1 (Fall 1998). pp. 118-9.

domestic romance, using multiple interracial marriages across three generations of the same family to allegorize the shifting articulations of race in the very period at which Child and Sedgwick write. By at first giving us a relatively successful sexual union between Indian and white, and then progressively more problematic relationships, until Indian/white congress is simply impossible, Lewis exposes the production of race in the *pays de huate* of the ninteenth century as a response to the shift of Euroamerican desire from Ojibwe labor to Ojibwe land and natural resources.

Of vital importance, however, is the reversal Lewis makes in taking up the genre of domestic frontier fiction: instead of being white, the women are Ojibwe. The domestic spaces in which the novel operates are almost exclusively those controlled, or at least occupied, by Ojibwe women. This change forces us to reevaluate the operation of the genre in a different context. The domestic space being imagined is not an allegory for the U.S. nation, but rather the Ojibwe nation—at least its earliest articulation as nation. Moreover the frontier is not presented from the vantage of the imperial core expanding outward into the unknown, but from an indigenous core being continually enclosed upon, for whom the frontier offers its own kind of chaos, disruption and failure of law. Instead of crafting a story that shows how the frontier becomes familiar, Lewis creates a narrative in which the familiar becomes frontier.

Just as Lewis is interested in exposing the construction of race, she is also interested in showing the ways in which literary writing (especially the romance) structures and conditions the way the Ojibwe are percieved by non-Natives. In the earliest sections of the novel about Molly's grandparents, Lewis shows how John Johnston's literary romanticism is a precondition to his ability to treat Ozah-guscoday-wayquay as

an equal to himself, by imagining her as an organic noblewoman with rich cultural heritage equivalent to his own. In the second portion of the novel about Molly's aunt and uncle, Lewis shows how Henry Rowe Schoolcraft views the same cultural material in Jane Johnston Schoolcraft as ethnographic data that proves Indian inferiority to whites and legitimates their dispossession. The last section of the novel, dealing with Molly's Ojibwe contemporaries, illustrates potential alternative models of literary expression (and kinship) that offer greater potential for racial equality and the recognition of Ojibwe nationhood. In each of these sections, Lewis operates on a multitude of overlapping discourses, showing the complex interaction of gender, class, race, and culture as they are constructed and contested in the realm of writing.

Yet to read *The Invasion* simply as historical romance is to grievously misidentify the novel's genre and purpose. Lewis actively, even insistently, denies the narrative's generic coherence by forcing the homogenous conventionality of the romance plot to contend with the extreme heterogeneity of history, with its unclear motivations, archival gaps, and partisan contestations. Indeed, one may even say that Lewis calls upon the qualities of the historical romance—the very literary genre that produced and legitimated the structure of feeling that drove U.S. imperialism, racialization and Indian disposession—only to show how history and romance are incommensurate, if not incompatible, with one another.

The generic incoherence of *The Invasion* seems to be due to two interrelated, but contradictory impulses: a desire to assert the validity of a distinctly Ojibwe historical perspective (as well as its continuing relevance), complicated by an equally strong desire

to avoid identifying that perspective as Lewis' own. Like earlier Ojibwe writers, Lewis attempts to produce a piece of writing that articulates the validity of the Ojibwe's knowledge of their own history, culture and social conditions, without reproducing the negative effects of standard Euroamerican historiography.[27] Writing in a novelistic manner allows Lewis to fold information from the oral traditions of the Johnstone family seamlessly into the narrative in a manner that normative (Euroamerican) historiography simply would not permit, due to its bias against orality as an unreliable source of knowledge. Secondly, writing about Ojibwe history in a novelistic manner allows Lewis to give a sense of presence to the Ojibwe perspective that straight historiography simply would not permit. Lastly, writing about history in a novelistic manner allows Lewis to affectively supplement the history of the Johnstone family with language that can redirect the readers' sympathies and prejudices toward the Ojibwe nation.[28]

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27 As historian Maureen Konkle observes, throughout the 19th century Ojibwe literary output was directed toward articulating what she calls 'traditionary history.'27 Konkle argues that Ojibwe writers, such as William Whipple Warren, George Copway, George Henry, Peter Jones and Jane Johnston Schoolcraft (who appears as a major character in *The Invasion*), desired to directly challenge the authority of Euroamerican historical narratives that legitimated the dispossession of indigenous peoples, and counter them with their own. These Ojibwe writers assert that "traditional knowledge is a broad and heterogeneous body of knowledge, not confined to the past, that is adaptable to Eurocentric forms of literature and historiography" (166). What is important in Konkle's articulation of the form of traditionary history is the need to legitimize Ojibwe tradition both as an intellectually valid framework for understanding the contemporary world *and* emphasize the continuity of these traditions from the furthest reaches of the past into the present moment. This need resulted in works that took on an ambiguous generic position that defied established Euroamerican distinctions between historiography, ethnography, and reportage. As Konkle explains, "[Ojibwe writers] not only explained traditions but also explained their experience of whites and that of tribe generally; they wrote about treaties and broken agreements; they wrote about the progress of Indian nations as they understood it—usually all in the same book" (161). Indeed, the generic incoherence of these works was a fundamental part of their critical intervention, as they challenged the very classifications of knowledge that worked to isolate Ojibwe culture and history from their contemporary political struggles in the first place. Konkle, Maureen. *Writing Indian Nations: Native Intellectuals and the Politics of Historiography, 1827-1863*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004.

28 In embracing the narrative as a form that hovers between the authority of historiography and the affective power of the novel, Janet Lewis is hardly alone. In nineteenth century Latin America, the

Much like Theodore Beaulieu had done four decades prior, Janet Lewis turned to the novel as a way of drawing attention to the modernity of the contemporary Ojibwe, rather than their history. Lewis, like Beaulieu, draws her inspiration from the oral tradition, in her case the dibaajimowinan, the family histories she had heard from Molly and Howard Johnstone. As already discussed in the first chapter, presenting material from the Ojibwe oral tradition in a novelistic form inherently brings out a sense of contemporaneousness that other forms, such as the epic, hinder. In the case of *The Invasion*, this is all the more important as its primary subjects—precontact Native history and the Euroamerican settlement of the frontier—are often prone to being rendered in the epic mode. The mythologization of brave pioneers and savage Indians allows the history of colonial violence to be conceptually compartmentalized from contemporary existence. By employing a novelistic register, *The Invasion* domesticates that history—inviting readers to find connections between the history of colonization and their present experience.

This is especially important in the historical context of the Ojibwe of Upper Michigan at the time of *The Invasion's* publication. For all legal purposes, the Ojibwe had ceased to exist in Upper Michigan nearly eighty years prior to the publication of *The*

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historical narrative was employed as the prestige mode of anti-colonial nationalists. As Doris Sommer argues, the narrative form is incredibly useful for the purposes of a nationalist precisely because of this supplementarity: "Narrative isn't necessary only because the gaps in our historical knowledge make more 'modern' methods unfeasible; the supplement can then be taken for an origin of independent and local expression." Narrative supplements the strictly historiographical, imparting it with the same affective charge as the novel by giving historical actors interiority, by imaginatively filling in archival gaps, and giving a mere sequence of events the shape and direction of a plot. By filling in the gaps and silences of history with their own ideologically charged imagination, nationalist authors are able to inject into the inert stuff of history the emotionally satisfying containment, linearity and conclusiveness of a fictional story. Such narratives take the protean shapelessness of history and temper it, so that the emergence of the nation is not just the natural outcome of history, but also the only possible outcome—even when the nation has yet to actually achieve any sort of stable historical coherence. Sommer, Doris. "Foundational Fictions: When History Was Romance in Latin America." *Salmagundi* 82/83 (1989): 111-141.

Invasion. Unlike the situation at White Earth where the onus was on the Ojibwe to prove their ability to modernize, the Ojibwe at the Sault had to battle the perception that they had become extinct. The form of *The Invasion* as a historical novel that moves from the pre-colonial past to the post-termination present offers a narrative of continuity that challenges the disruptive narrative of termination and disappearance.

Yet, if writing in a novelistic style is so useful to Lewis's ideological purposes, one may ask why Lewis didn't make *The Invasion* more recognizably like a novel?[29] The reason, I believe, that Lewis resists fully embracing the novel's formal qualities is so that she may avoid adversely domesticating the original material on which *The Invasion* is based—which would run counter to her anti-settler colonial ambition. By inserting her authorial voice into the Johnstone family's narrative in the form of extensive dialog or indirect speech, Lewis would have run the risk of taking possession of the Johnstones' history as her own. Indeed, the reviewer for *The Nation* seems to have intuited Lewis' project, commending her for her "conscientious approach to historical materials," but ultimately "wish[es] she had violated her integrity to fact by introducing more conspicuous motivating centers to her tale."[30] Doing so, however, would only serve to replicate the kind of exploitative appropriation that she sees in the figure of Henry Rowe

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29 Lewis was certainly capable of the form, subsequently writing three conventional novels, along with a many short stories, in her career. Two of her novels, *The Wife of Martin Guerre* and *The Trial of Soren Qvist* are also reconstructions of historical events (like *The Invasion*), but conform closely to novelistic conventions.

30 Zabel, p. 538.

Schoolcraft—whose self-serving ethnographic study of the Ojibwe is negatively portrayed in *The Invasion.* [31]

In the balancing act she performs between the authority of historiography and the intimacy of the novel, Lewis produces a work that it is formally unsettled—never fully cohering into a work with a definitive identity, or a sense of overall unity. Instead, the book is messy, full of gaps and distances, awkward transitions and ambiguous motivations—forcing the reader to contend with it unpleasantly rather than merely accept it as an authoritative text. I do not believe that the irregularity of *The Invasion* was a conscious choice on the part of Lewis, but rather the reflection of the author's internal struggle to bring her own settler biases into relief. The book's ambiguity is a document of Lewis's own unsettlement, a traumatic confrontation with a history that defined her existence and identity, but of which she remained unconscious. A history that, once acknowledged, stuck with her.

Dropped from the Clouds

Lewis begins her novel with the death of the Marquis de Montcalm at the Battle of the Plains of Abraham, in 1759. The defeat of the French general outside the gates of Quebec City was a turning point in the Seven Years War, and a watershed moment in the colonial history of North America. The image of Montcalm's death has been fixed into

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31 Lewis may have been avoiding the kind of ethnographic reconstruction of Indian consciousness offered by Oliver LaFarge in *Laughing Boy* (1930). If so, she was working against her own self interest as a young, unknown novelist. LaFarge's novel won a Pulitzer and was quite popular—copying his approach would have been appealing for someone simply seeking literary fame by exploiting Indian cultural materials.

the colonial imaginary through a series of famous visual depictions by Defontaines (Fig. 3), Watteau and Chevillet. In each of these images, Montcalm is surrounded by his officers and *aides de camp* outside his tent, while his Indian allies look on insensibly from the margins of the image, seemingly unable to register the magnitude of the moment. Against this image, Lewis gives a depiction of the event as she heard it from the Johnstones, with the Ojibwe ogichidaa Ma-mongazid cradling the mortally wounded general. For Ma-mongazid, with his "dark sorrowful face, with its war paint of vermillion and white, intent above the French face graying rapidly," the death of Montcalm is a serious blow to his tribe's interests, as the French had proven to be trustworthy allies. By replacing the image of a nameless, tribeless Indian at the literal margins of history with that of a historic Ojibwe leader in the center of this precipitous moment, Lewis signals her intent: to depart from the settler account of history and take up the perspective of the Ojibwe. As Ma-mongazid and his party leave the scene of the French defeat, Lewis draws the reader even further toward the Ojibwe:

> Presently they took the Marquis to the hospital at St. Charles, where he died. Ma-Mongazid with his warriors in thirty bark canoes returned to La Pointe Chegoimegon through the yellowing woods and increasing storms of autumn. The rule of the French was over, the Province of Michilimackinac had become the Northwest Territory. The Ojibways called the English Saugunosh, the Dropped-from-the-Clouds, and regretted the French.

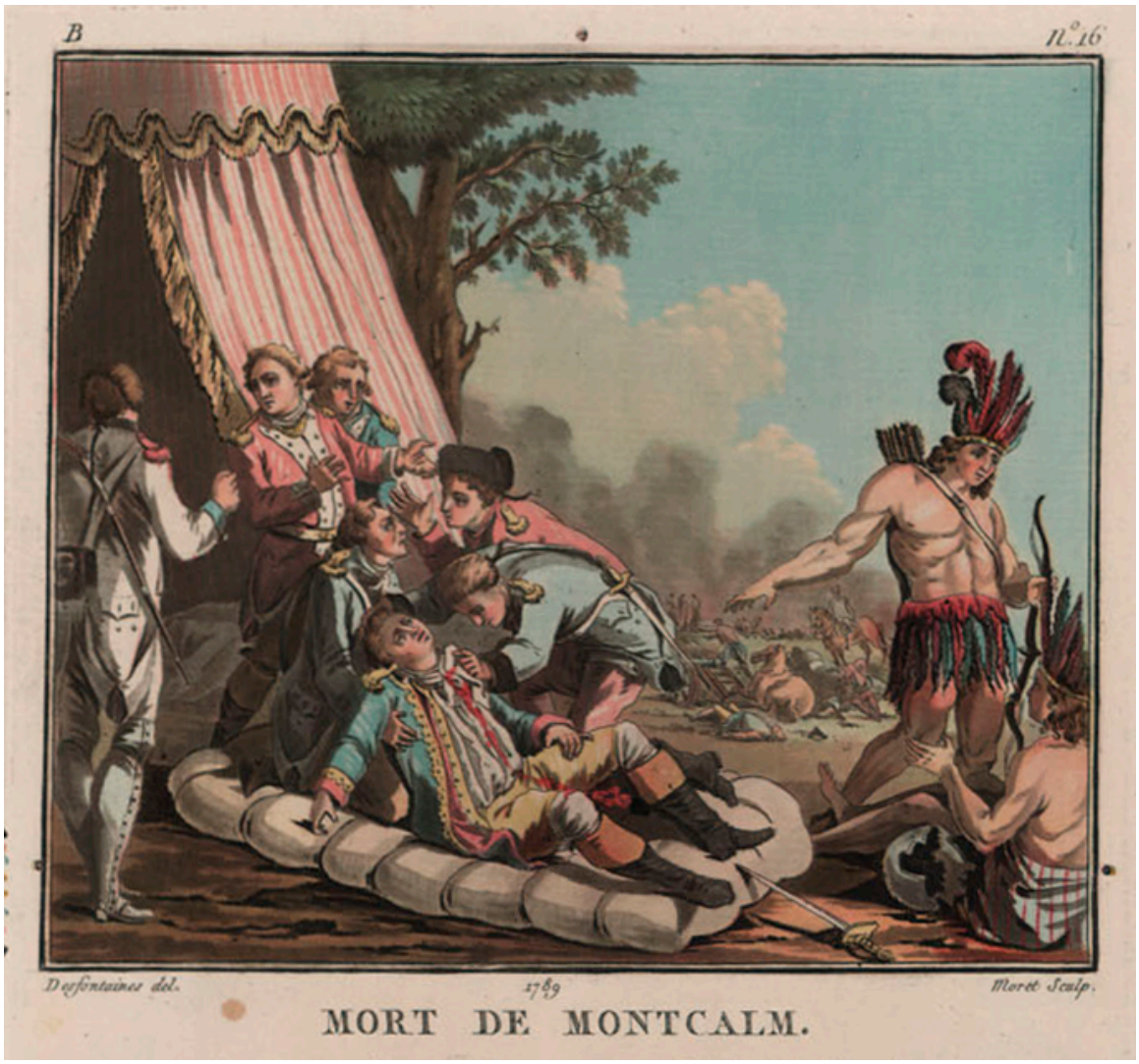

Fig. 3 - Desfontaines, *Mort de Montcalm* (lithograph, 1789)

Lewis's strategy is subtle but effective. The flatness with which the narration treats Montcalm's death is telling: this is not his, or any other colonial nation's story. Starting with a recognizable historical event important to the colonial histories of both the U.S. and Canada, Lewis draws the reader further away from a Euroamerican perspective as the canoes of the Ojibwe make the journey back to Chegoimegon—the center of Ojibwe cultural and social life.

Having established the perspective of the novel, Lewis takes pains to show the Ojibwe as a coherent social body with its own sovereign integrity—continuously invoking the language of nationhood to do so. By showing the social and geographical stability of the Ojibwe prior to settlement, Lewis disrupts the image of Indian barbarity and nomadism, replacing them with an image of an Ojibwe society organized in a recognizably national fashion, with strong centralized leadership and a discrete understanding of its territorial and cultural boundaries. The first chapter opens in 1791 at the village of Chegoimegon (now La Pointe, Wisconsin) during a summer gathering of the Mide (2). After runners are sent out to gather together various bands of Odawa, Potawatomi and Ojibwe at Chegoimegon, "many light shelters [. . .] built of saplings thrust into the ground in a circle, the unremitting labor and gentleness, the ends tied together at the top and the framework covered with rush or cedar mats, or with pieces of bark" (5) spring up, adding considerably to the "sixty or more wigwams of the regular village" (7). Presiding over this convocation is Waub-ojeeg, the son of Ma-mongazid, the "hereditary chieftain of the Ojibway nation," whose military prowess against the Sioux has ensured that "Lake Superior and all the surrounding territory was Ojibway, and the

center of Ojibway power was Chegoimegon" (2). Settler colonial narratives paint indigenous space as fundamentally empty and indigenous social life as too primitive to facilitate the kind of large-scale organization necessary to constitute a national identity. Much of this portion of the novel relies on Lewis's imaginative recreation of Ojibwe life, yet where Lewis directly intervenes, she does so with an eye toward making the Ojibwe seem *less* exotic—downplaying elements of their cultural practices that would seem alien to a Euroamerican reader and highlighting those that seem familiar. The effect is to take the *pays d'en haut* and transform it in the minds of her readers from a desolate frontier into a recognizable, even familiar, *homeland*.

Through her characterization of Waub-ojeeg Lewis carries out the most direct work of disrupting reader's expectations about the nature of indigenous political power. In settling a territorial dispute between two Ojibwe hunters, Lewis uses Waub-ojeeg to illustrate the Ojibwe's sophisticated understanding of territorial rights, and establish a sense of Waub-ojeeg's sovereign authority. In the scene, Waub-ojeeg is approached by Little Thunder, who has found the traps of Cloud Approaching on his trapping territory. Little Thunder claimed the traps, along with the animals they contained, earning the ire of Cloud Approaching, who threatens Little Thunder for stealing his game. Hearing the facts of the matter, Waub-ojeeg gives his judgment:

> He deliberated the case with a pipeful of tobacco, and finally told Little Thunder he best return the pelts. The meat, which he had partly consumed, he might keep. He asked him to return the pelts because Cloud Approaching was a relative and it was not wise to quarrel within one's own family. Moreover the traps and the labor

> were Cloud Approaching's, and Little Thunder had been late in his hunting. He would give a message to Little Thunder to present Cloud Approaching, warning him to stay in his own territory, and he would send one small mokkuk of sugar to the wife of Little Thunder as a gift from Waub-ojeeg. (28-9)

In fashioning this fictional depiction of Waub-ojeeg's political leadership, Lewis works to bring out the qualities in his authority that make him recognizable to a Euroamerican reader as the source of sovereign authority. First, she shows Waub-ojeeg's authority as a civil leader as being primarily social and not martial. Lewis wants her readers to understand that Waub-ojeeg is not a backwoods chieftain ruling by caprice (as the settler colonial narrative would have it), but a reasoning political actor, whose primary role is to enforce, rationally and fairly, a previously agreed-upon set of laws.

Secondly, and most importantly, the scene depicts the Ojibwe as having a defined political sense of territory—that is, land use is managed and controlled through sovereign authority. Where popular settler accounts hold that Native people had no sense of property, Lewis offers a more sophisticated (and historically accurate) depiction of Ojibwe land tenure. As Lewis depicts, a band's land base was held in common, but exclusive usufructory rights to demarcated territories were claimed by individual hunters and trappers. Ogimaag like Waub-ojeeg managed the band's entire land-base, fixing boundaries between hunting territories and settling disputes between claimants when they arose.[32] In this capacity, the ogimaag expressed a sovereign authority over a band's

32 Miller, Cary. *Ogimaag: Anishinaabeg Leadership, 1760-1845*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska Press, 2010. pp. 65-111.

territory, as they determined the rules governing property, along with deciding when to create exceptions to those rules. Lewis extends this sense of Waub-ojeeg's sovereignty beyond simple hunting rights, however, imagining the ogimaa's perspective on the political situation in the *pays d'en haut* after the Seven Years War:

> In some remote way [Waub-ojeeg] acknowledged a British jurisdiction over and above the Ojibway. He did not think of the land as being British, but of the Ojibways as being bound by treaty to the English as they were to the Ottawas, Potawatomis, Illinois, and Menominees. He expected to punish an Ojibway who transgressed against an Englishman, and he expected the English to do justice for the Ojibways upon French or English. He granted the English the right to trade in his territory; he admitted the day of the French was over.

Lewis's description of Waub-ojeeg's power is unequivocal here: it is *he* who grants the English the right to travel in *his* territory. Lewis does nothing in this description to diminish or undermine the credibility of Waub-ojeeg's—and subsequently the Ojibwe's—claim to sovereign authority over their own land. She is unequivocal in her depiction of the Ojibwe belief in the equivalence of their sovereign authority to that of the French or English, as well as their expectation that these powers respect it. In doing so, Lewis primes the reader to conceptualize the subsequent events of novel explicitly in terms of the status quo of a sovereign Ojibwe nationhood.

What comes next in *The Invasion* is a depiction of the very different ways in which two Euroamericans, John Johnston and Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, related

themselves to the Ojibwe nation. In the way that Lewis chooses to portray them, the relationships each of these white men forge with Waub-ojeeg's descendants becomes a allegorical model: with Johnston the positive potential for a Euroamerican to recognize and submit himself to Ojibwe sovereignty, and Schoolcraft the destructiveness of disregarding it. Where John Johnston's relationship with the Ojibwe represents the potential for economic and social integration in the fur trade era (1750-1819), Henry Rowe Schoolcraft's exploitation of the Ojibwe as a way of achieving personal fame replicates the systematic dispossession of the treaty era (1820-1855), and ends her novel with a depiction of the poverty and hardship of the Michigan Ojibwe during the long period in which they went without federal recognition (1855-1932). By allegorizing the Ojibwe's experience of colonization through the portrait of these two men in a domestic setting, Lewis is able to give her critique of settler colonialism a high degree of affective charge, showing its effects on an intimate, interpersonal scale. Lewis shows how the Ojibwe struggle to find a way to share a *home* with these white men. In so doing she offers a reversal of the standard narrative of American expansion. Instead of a story that shows how the frontier becomes familiar, Lewis presents a narrative in which the familiar domestic world of the Ojibwe becomes the frontier—a space of lawlessness, chaos and violence caused by the failure of Euroamericans to recognize Ojibwe sovereignty.

An Alliance Between Two Noble Houses

Lewis's depiction of the relationship between John Johnston and Ozah-guscoday-waquay (Molly's grandparents) reflects the potential for a non-exploitative relationship

between Native and white made possible by a particular social and cultural milieu that took hold in the *pays d'en haut* at the end of the 18th century. Richard White has famously described this period as being defined by a concept he calls the "middle ground," a process of cultural accommodation and compromise that came to define the era. As White describes it, the interactions between Algonquians (like the Ojibwe) and Europeans during this time were conditioned by "the inability of both sides to gain their ends through force," and which compelled both to "attempt to understand the world and the reasoning of others and to assimilate enough of that reasoning to put it to their own purposes."[33] White's formulation of the middle ground is essential to understanding the economic, political and cultural work being done by the marriage of Johnston and Ozah-guscoday-wayquay, because sexual unions between Natives and non-Natives were the predominant site where the middle ground was instantiated. As Ojibwe historian Brenda Child argues, "The necessities of the fur trade made permeable the borders of Ojibwe and European society, with marriages between newcomers and indigenous women becoming the foundation upon which new cultural relations were constructed in the Great Lakes."[34] More often than not, the production of such new cultural understandings was a messy and imperfect project, based on "creative, and often expedient, misunderstandings" instead of genuine, reciprocal comprehension.[35]

Lewis fixates particularly on a creative misunderstanding that forms the basis of Johnston and Ozah-guscoday-wayquay's relationship, one that reflects the positive

33 White, p. 52.

34 Child, p. 32.

35 White, p. x.

potential for an Euroamerican settler to recognize—and submit himself to—indigenous sovereignty. The generative misunderstanding Lewis focuses upon is Johnston's insistence on seeing himself and his bride-to-be through a European-derived understanding of patrilineal aristocracy, which allows him to imagine Ozah-guscoday-wayquay as his social and economic equal. Early on in their courtship, Johnston seems intent on partnering with Ozah-guscoday-wayquay *à la façon du pays.* Approaching Waub-ojeeg with a request to marry Ozah-guscoday-wayquay, Johnston receives this response:

> Englishman, your color is deceitful. I have watched your people now for many years. You come among us and marry our daughters, and when you are tired of them you say you are not married, and go away. I cannot let you marry my daughter and desert her. But I have watched you and your conduct has been right. I think you are better than the others. I say to you now, go back to Montreal, to your own people, and look among them for a wife. If you do not find a woman who pleases you, and if when the summer is gone you still wish my daughter, return to this place, and I will give her to you. If you take her you must keep her forever, as you would a woman of your own race. I have said. (38)

The way in which Lewis presents Waub-ojeeg's rebuff loads it with political significance, highlighting the ogimaa's assertion of national difference and sovereign authority. By making Waub-ojeeg's ultimatum based on the differences he perceives between his peoples' concept of marriage and that of an Englishman (the historical

accounts Lewis draws upon give "white man" instead), Lewis shows conflict not to be one of culture, but of *law*.[36] In order to gain Waub-ojeeg's permission to marry Ozah-guscoday-wayquay, Johnston must recognize that such a union is as legitimately binding as any marriage conducted under Euroamerican law, underwritten by Waub-ojeeg's sovereign authority, as emphasized in his definitive declaration of "I have said." In essence, Waub-ojeeg is demanding that if Johnston marries Ozah-guscoday-wayquay, that he understand that it will bind him, legally and culturally, to Waub-ojeeg and the Ojibwe.

Johnston complies to Waub-ojeeg's directive, doing so by imaginatively recasting Ojibwe social organization and political power into a form that is recognizable to himself as legitimate: the patrilineal aristocracy of Europe. Writing to his semi-aristocratic Scots-Irish family about his impending union to Ozah-guscoday-wayquay, Johnston makes it "quite plain that he was no squaw man," asserting "that this was to be an alliance between two noble houses" and finishing his letter in a chivalric flourish by "prais[ing] the beauty of his lady, and her virtue" (41). Despite all of her vast cultural differences,

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36 Lewis departs from both of her sources on Waub-ojeeg's speech. Thomas McKenney presents it in the language of a transaction between the two men—leaving out Waub-ojeeg's insistence on Johnston and Ozah-guscoday-wayquay's marriage as legally binding: "White man, I have noticed your behavior. It has been correct. But, white man, *your colour is deceitful.* Of you, may I expect better things? You say you are going to return to Montreal—go; and if you return, I shall be satisfied of your sincerity, and will give you my daughter." McKenney, Thomas. *History of the Indian Tribes of North America*. Applewood Books, 2010. pp. 154-5.

Anna Jameson maintains Waub-ojeeg's criticism of white hypocrisy, but undercuts Waub-ojeeg's authoritative tone:

> White man! […] your customs are not our customs! You white men desire our women, you marry them, and when they cease to please your eye, you say they are not your wives and you forsake them. Return, young friend, to Montreal; and if there the women of the pale faces do not put my child out of your mind, return hither in the spring, and we will talk farther; she is young, and can wait.

Jameson, Anna. *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada*. Saunders and Otley, 1838. pp. 210-1.

Johnston imagines Ozah-guscoday-wayquay to be of equal rank to himself—and therefore worthy of binding his family's reputation and fortunes to her own. While it is impossible to know how the historical Johnston really understood his spouse's social position comparative to his own, in Lewis's fictional account the Johnston's rationalization is presented as completely ingenuous. Johnston truly believes that he is forming a new aristocracy in the *pays d'en haut,* even going as far as creating "a crest of his own devising" comprised of "a crane, totem of the home band of St. Mary's, several elk heads, and the motto *Vive ut Postea Vivas*" (64).

Johnston's adoption of the Crane doodem is more than symbolic. After his marriage to Ozah-guscoday-wayquay, Johnston finds that: "the attitude of the Indians had changed toward him, and realized in himself also a changed attitude. A corner of the blanket of Waub-ojeeg had descended upon his shoulders, involving, besides greater favor of the Indians, greater responsibilities" (48). By recognizing and submitting himself to Ojibwe political authority, Johnston is compelled to enter into the reciprocal-communalist system of Ojibwe kinship networks, which in turn forces him to forgo the colonial project of exploiting Anshinaabe land and labor, and instead support his kin. By the time of his death, Lewis tells us, "Johnston's books [. . .] showed a loss of nearly forty thousand dollars in credits to individual Indians [. . .] and the chance that any of it would ever be repaid to the estate was, at that time, negligible" (149). Driven by his own sense of largesse, Johnston has forsaken the profit motive to the point of bankruptcy in order to disperse among the Ojibwe the material goods they need. By imagining his dispersals of trade goods to the Ojibwe as the *noblesse oblige* of a feudal lord, instead of an expenditure of capital in the form of credit*,* Johnston is able to operate in Ojibwe kinship

networks in a manner that does not vigorously contradict his identity as a Euroamerican.[37] Under the continued tutelage of Waub-ojeeg and Ozah-guscoday-wayquay, Johnston ceases being a colonist who expropriates resources and labor from the Ojibwe, and has become a good kinsman who redirects wealth back to his tribe.

The key role of Johnston and Ozah-guscoday-wayquay's relationship in the narrative structure of *The Invasion* is to undermine the sense of settler colonialism as an inevitable outcome of Euroamerican-Native contact. By showing the possibility for mutual interdependence borne out of a respect for Native political authority, Lewis presents Ozah-guscodaway-quay and Johnston as a model for "the weaving together of two races, and a possible way of coexisting" (Carnochan). It is vital to recognize, however, the degree to which this possible mode of coexistence is predicated on the mitigation of Johnston's capitalist impulses and adoption of Ozah-guscoday-wayquay's system of redistributive kinship obligations. This is an important distinction to make, as Lewis is at pains to present Johnston as the rarest of exceptions in the otherwise exploitative and incredibly disruptive fur trade economy, which she describes in interview as "terrible for the Indians," explaining it as embodiment of "the passion the European had for clearing out whatever could be taken from the continent."[38]

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37 Robert Bieder, a historian of the Sault, explains that although the fur trade "mimicked a seigneurial world" he asserts "it was also compatible with the Ojibwa society, which was characterized by heavy kinship obligations and responsibilities. Indeed, in many ways, Sault society was more Ojibwa than European and proved superbly adapated [sic] to the severe environment and precarious economic situation." Bieder, Robert E. "Sault Ste. Marie and the War of 1812: A World Turned Upside Down in the Old Northwest." *Indiana Magazine of History* 95.1 (1999): 1-13.

38 Carnochan papers, np.

The Inevitable Tide of Settlers

The potential reciprocity of white/Indian relations is soured, however, in the marriage of Ozah-guscoday-wayquay and Johnston's daughter, Jane Johnston, to Henry Rowe Schoolcraft. The educated, sophisticated Jane is the embodiment of the harmonious admixture of her mother and father's respective cultural traditions, making her the perfect ambassador for the coming age of increased Euroamerican/Ojibwe contact. Lewis presents Schoolcraft, however, as a character who cannot see Indians—even his own wife—as his intellectual, moral, or cultural equals. Lewis presents the marriage of these two as inherently exploitative, with Schoolcraft using Jane and her family as a social, cultural and political resource on which he capitalizes for his own benefit. Where Schoolcraft is initially dependent on the knowledge and political power of Jane and her family for his very survival, by the end of his time in the narrative Schoolcraft has ascended to dizzying heights of fame and success, while the fortunes of the Johnstons have precipitously declined—along with those of the Ojibwe generally.

This section of the novel dramatizes the historical shift in settler-Ojibwe relations that took place after the War of 1812. With the U.S. anxious to establish colonial dominance over its newly claimed territory, the Ojibwe faced an imminent flood of Euroamerican settlers. The U.S. was desirous of Ojibwe land. Surveys of the area surrounding the Great Lakes indicated the potential for vast deposits of copper, lead and iron. The Ojibwe, aware of the treatment of the eastern tribes at the hands of the U.S., were equally desirous to avoid warfare as well as the growing threat of removal—submitting to U.S. dominance with little political or military opposition. With the fur trade in collapse due to changing fashions and the overexploitation of fur-bearing

animals, the trade-based economic system the Ojibwe had relied upon for generations was beginning to crumble. Faced with the prospect of extreme privation due to the loss of both their game and trade goods, the eastern bands of Ojibwe entered the treaty-making process at a disadvantage to the U.S. The result was a quick series of treaties effected between the U.S. and the Great Lakes Ojibwe between 1821 and 1836 that conveyed the majority of the territory that would later become Michigan, Wisconsin and parts of eastern Minnesota to the U.S. The negotiation of these treaties, drafted during the most intense period of Indian removal in the east, were a relative success for the Ojibwe, who were able to avoid relocation to the Indian Territories, remaining on their homelands—now ceded, however, to the U.S.

Schoolcraft comes into the narrative at the moment of the first treaty with the U.S., acting as a geologist in the expeditionary company of Lewis Cass, governor of Michigan Territory.[39] Cass's mission is to explore the tributaries of Lake Superior and to secure American political dominance over the Sault through the installation of a military base—the land for which he must acquire from the Ojibwe. Cass heralds the radical change in colonial relations that U.S. imperial power represents for the Ojibwe, both in his desire for their land as well as the means he is willing to pursue to attain it. In treaty negotiations, Cass claims the land of the Ojibwe is already the U.S.'s "by right of … conquest" but is "willing and ready to purchase it again by gifts" (99), ominously warning, "their White Father in Washington … hoped to make them presents of blankets than presents of bullets" (100). For their part, the Ojibwe, "tired of being handed from nation to nation, having spent some three generations—Indian—in transferring their

39 Cass would also serve as Andrew Jackson's Secretary of War.

affections from the French to English, were unwilling to transfer them again to the Americans." To this sentiment, Lewis adds her own aside: "and there is not much to indicate that the Americans had ever done anything to make this transfer easy" (78)—as she illustrates when one ogimaa pronounces his continued allegiance to the British. At this, Cass flies into a rage, declaring "if the Ojibways should ever again attempt to fly any flag but the American on the south side of the rapids he would 'set a strong foot upon their rock and crush them utterly'" (102). Put into a position where they must choose between capitulation and annihilation,[40] the Ojibwe relent, with Lewis grimly commenting: "For the Ojibways it was the beginning of the end. They were not to be deported, like the Potawatomis, exiled into unfamiliar and hostile territory; they were to stay where they were, in their own country, to be gradually obliterated by the inevitable tide of settlers" (107).

Schoolcraft acts, quiet literally, in *The Invasion* as the agent responsible for ushering in this new settler colonial regime. Due to his seeming fascination with the Indian, Cass installs Schoolcraft as the Indian agent of the Sault—making him the highest ranking representative of the U.S. in the area. Reflecting upon his own legacy late in the novel, Schoolcraft is proud to be "associated, in one way or another, with and personally present at every treaty made with the Ojibways since 1820" (190). However, he is more proud of his 'discovery' (and exploitation) of the Ojibwe's cultural resources, which have made him "something more than an obscure Indian agent at a remote post, something more even, than the Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the State of Michigan" (195).

40 This is an example of what Mark Rifkin calls the "dialectic of 'impossibility' and 'acquiescence'" which "lies at the heart of U.S. imperialism in the antebellum period." Rifkin, Mark. *Manifesting America: The Imperial Construction of U.S. National Space*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009. p. 5.

Lewis makes clear both Schoolcraft's condescending attitude and his desire to mine the intellectual wealth of the Ojibwe oral tradition when she depicts him writing in his journal, "Who would have imagined that these wandering foresters should have possessed such a resource?" (114). For Schoolcraft, it will prove to be a resource more valuable than the region's vast mineral wealth, as his ethnographic explorations "into the dark cave of the Indian mind" make him a famous and powerful man (190).

In pursuing a study of the Ojibwe, Schoolcraft's goal is not to foster a greater understanding of their culture, but to measure it, judge it, and ultimately take possession of it for his own ends. So much is clear when Schoolcraft, finding himself frustrated by his inability to understand Ojibwemowin grammar, goes on a "linguistic spree" in which he "reform[s] the Ojibway language from the foundations up" (122). Schoolcraft determines that his incomprehension of Ojibwemowin stems from its inferiority to Indo-European languages, a deficiency he decides to correct:

> He wanted a monosyllabic Ojibway. He was willing, for the sake of rhythmic variety, to retain a few dissyllables as well. He wanted pronouns which declined themselves regularly; he wanted nouns to form their plurals, their pejoratives, diminutives, and augmentatives regularly, and he wished to increase the number of words expressing abstract ideas. He was willing to retain all existing monosyllables, provided he might regulate their changes, but the polysyllables he intended to reduce. … He found it necessary to add to the language new sounds it had never contained, the English *f, l, r,* and *v*, and when he had done so, felt

himself well on the way to achieving "a language of great brevity terseness, regularity and poetic expressiveness." (122)

The imperious tone Lewis lends the passage highlights the arrogance of Schoolcraft's attitude toward the Ojibwe, but also explicitly ties his ethnographic work to the expropriative project of U.S. imperial expansion that such work enables. It is not difficult to read in Schoolcraft's reformation of the Ojibwe language an allegorically-charged representation of the U.S.'s historical treatment of indigenous peoples, highlighting the emergent double-bind of settler colonial dominance—the expropriation of indigenous cultural knowledge into the hands of white experts as a valuable intellectual resource, while simultaneously demanding Indian assimilation to Euroamerican cultural and social practices.[41] As befits such a prolific facilitator of the colonial project, Schoolcraft is

41 Reading a passage written by the historical Schoolcraft gives us insight into the way he reconciled his interest in Ojibwe culture with his complicity in the settler colonial project of dismantling it. In his introduction to *Algic Researches,* Henry Schoolcraft wrote that an ethnographic account of the Ojibwe was necessary because they and their way of life was fated to disappear. In describing the situation of the Indians, Schoolcraft wrote:

> The two powers [Euroamericans and Indians] were, however, placed in circumstances adverse to the prosperous and contemporaneous growth of both, while they occupied a territory over which there was a disputed sovereignty. It must needs have happened, that the party which increased the fastest in numbers, wanted most land, and had most knowledge (to say nothing of the influence of temperance and virtue), should triumph, and those who failed in these requisites, decline. (35)

The result of the Indians' inevitable decline was that, "[e]very year is diminishing their numbers and adding to the obscurity of their traditions (26)." Necessitating that white men, such as himself, engage in "rescuing their oral tales and fictitious legends" before they disappeared completely. Such information was valuable as far as it provided "an important link in the chain" in understanding the historical development of the "origins of races of men" (27). The logic has a degree of circularity, in which indigenous knowledge, threatened by the encroachment of a superior Euroamerican culture, be preserved in order to legitimate its own destruction by proving its inferiority to Euroamerican culture. The process is ultimately one of alienation, in which indigenous cultural knowledge is transferred from Indians to whites as a way of facilitating the transfer of indigenous land.

A transcribed dibaajimowin told late in *The Invasion* neatly encapsulates the destructive, dispossessive nature of this process of cultural alienation:

handsomely rewarded by settler society, becoming a regent of the University of Michigan, a territorial legislator, and a minor national celebrity for his 'discovery' of "the true and final source of the Mississippi River" at Lake Itasca (193). [42]

Lewis carefully fosters a sense that all of Henry's gains are ill gotten, achieved only through the efforts of the Indians helping him—a fact Schoolcraft is loath to acknowledge. Lewis undercuts the triumph of Schoolcraft's discovery of Lake Itasca by describing him as "having been led there by the hand, as it were, by an Ojibway from Leech Lake" (193). Despite producing a grammar and vocabulary of Ojibwemowin, Schoolcraft continues to find the language "pleasanter to record and systematize than to

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> Once there was an Indian who became Christian. He threw away his Mide bag, he stopped making prayers to the Master of Life, he never gave any more tobacco to Nokomis the earth. He came to Bawating and sang hymns with Ogene-bugoquay [Charlotte Johnston], very nice hymns. He thought he was a pretty good Christian. So one day he died. He went to Christian heaven, and when he get there they say to him, 'This is Christian heaven. The Master of Life he has a very good heaven for Indians. You better go there because you can't come in here.' So he start off to the Lodge of Reindeer. When he comes to Gitche Genabik he can't get across. Gitche Genabik says to him, 'You threw away your Mide bag, you never make any offering to our Grandmother the earth. What make you think you can cross Gitche Genabik?' So that Indian, he wander around like Wahwahtasee. I think maybe he turn into Wahwahtaysee. He carry his little light around, he never fly very high, he never get away from earth, he has no place to go. (166)

The dibaajimowin shows how the shell-game of settler dominance in which the logics of cultural difference and racial difference are substituted for one another at will. Only after the Indian gives up his cultural practices and conforms himself to white hegemony is it revealed that his racial difference cannot be transcended, and he must remain excluded from dominant society. Trying to return to traditional Ojibwe practices, he finds the situation reversed once more, judged not on his racial difference, but on his proper adherence to a set of cultural practices.

42 The symbolic connection Lewis makes between Schoolcraft's desire to exploit Indian cultural material and his work to dispossess the Ojibwe of their land and natural resources has been corroborated by a raft of recent criticism. Robert Dale Parker observes that "Just as Henry worked with Jackson Democrats to support the 'removal' of Indian people from their land, so he sometimes seems to try to remove Indian people from their own stories" (61). Like Lewis, Joshua Bellin also links Schoolcraft's dual roles of geologist and ethnographer, arguing "Schoolcraft's work finally reveals (or conceals) that at the heart of ethnology lies not mental but material speculation, conflict over America's ground" (152). The harshest criticism comes from Maureen Konkle, who refuses to mince word by saying "Schoolcraft's transformation of the knowledge provided by his wife's family into evidence of Indians' difference, inferiority, and impending disappearance quite literally supported colonial control" (167). That Lewis could come to a similar conclusion in 1932 is almost astounding, given the high degree of historical reverence with which Schoolcraft was treated at the time. For example, Chase Osborn, the source of much of Lewis's historical information, wrote of him in 1942: "To the Indians Henry Rowe Schoolcraft was a sun god" (558).

speak," meaning that he "never, to the end of his career, dispensed with the services of an interpreter" (120). Lewis describes the culmination of Schoolcraft's career, *Algic Researches*, not as the product of his genius, but merely as collection of "material which had, as it were, been selected for him by Jane Schoolcraft" (226). The combined effect of such passages is to confirm the sense that the entirety of Schoolcraft's success is predicated on settler colonial expropriation—taking Indian land and knowledge and refiguring it as his own, all the while obscuring the agency and specificity of the Indians from whom he steals.[43]

As the treaty-making era comes to a close, Lewis shows Schoolcraft's legacy among the Ojibwe as one of disruption and exploitation, leaving them with their identity unmoored and their land fully dispossessed. To do so, Lewis takes advantage of the (apparent) coincidence of two events that take place in 1855. The first is the publication of *The Song of Hiawatha*, heavily based on Schoolcraft's *Algic Researches*, by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, destined to become one of the most popular and recognizable pieces of literature in American history. The second is the signing of the Treaty of

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43 This is particularly clear in Lewis's description of *Algic Researches*, in which she draws attention to Henry's exclusion of those members of the Johnston family whose Indianness he cannot (or will not) obscure:

> Jane's name was on the page of acknowledgments, and those of George, William, and Charlotte (Mrs. McMurray of Dundas), and Anna Maria (Mrs. James Lawrence Schoolcraft of Detroit)—the contents being the Ojibway tales these people, or others, but chiefly these, had related to him on winter evenings at St. Mary's. The name of Neengay [Ozah-guscoday-wayquay] was not recorded, neither was that of Miss Eliza—she had never been much given to social converse with her brother-in-law; he frequently annoyed her by what seemed to her a condescension toward Jane's Indian ancestry—but she knew that Neengay's memory and her own had aided and prompted many a recital of the stories here recorded… (189)

Eliza Johnston expresses pleasure when receiving a copy of *Algic Researches* from Henry, but this is due to seeing her people's stories "acknowledged publicly, as it were, printed and bound," and not a tacit endorsement of Schoolcraft's ethnographic project (189).

Detroit, a final treaty between the U.S. and the Ojibwe of Michigan that abrogated all prior treaties, privatized any remaining reservation lands into individual allotments, and formally terminated the trust responsibility of the U.S. to the tribe:

> …before the end of the year the *Song of Hiawatha* had been brought out in eleven thousand copies. Many a child had pages of it by heart before, in accordance with the Treaty of 1855, the bands were dissolved and the Ojibway nation ceased to be a reality. … Mr. Emerson … wrote that the poem was as sweet and wholesome as Indian corn. The nation in general, now that the West was safe for civilization, the Indian question having been solved by treaty, deportation, and other methods kinder not to mention, was delighted to contemplate the Indian as 'a human being capable of the tenderest emotions" (226)

Schoolcraft's efforts to convey both Ojibwe culture and land into the hands of whites has laid the groundwork for the emergence of a fully-formed settler colonial regime. Because of him, Euroamericans are able to embrace a mythic Indianness as their own cultural patrimony while simultaneously refusing to recognize the continued existence of actual Indians, who have become merely "citizens of the United States, having varying ancestry" (224).

This Your House?

After the ratification of the Treaty of 1855, the Ojibwe of Michigan struggled with catastrophic hardship. The treaty's allotment scheme—slowly implemented and

underfunded—insured that what little the Ojibwe had was conveyed into white hands through squatting, tax forfeiture and outright theft. No longer recognized as a coherent political body by the U.S., the Ojibwe of Michigan had little or no legal recourse to contest their dispossession. Although legally disbanded, the Michigan Ojibwe largely retained their cultural and social identity—continuing to speak their language and maintaining the seasonal round of fishing, syruping and trapping that had provided subsistence to their ancestors. The Michigan Ojibwe oftentimes had to rely on a traditional way of living as a means of survival, as their loss of Indian status denied them benefits from federal Indian aid programs that provided food, healthcare and shelter to other Native peoples. While their legal status as Indians had disappeared, their racial status as non-whites remained intact, placing the Ojibwe on the bottom of the emerging settler social order. Living largely in squats and shanty towns at a distance from white population centers, the Ojibwe became low-skill laborers to support themselves, taking up logging, mining or carrying the mail.[44] As the timber and mining economies declined, many Ojibwe sought work as domestics and fishing guides at the resorts that bore Ojibwe-sounding names, and drew on the image of Michigan's exotic Indian past.

Despite the enormity of these losses, Lewis maintains the potential for a renegotiation of the settler/indigenous relationship in a scene that comes near the end of the novel.[45] The premise of the scene is a moment of contact, offering a comic reversal of the foundational narrative of the United States—with Indians playing the role of

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44 Cleland, Charles E. *The Place of the Pike (Gnoozhekaaning): a History of the Bay Mills Indian Community*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001. pp. 17-30

45 Originally written as a short story and published in *The Bookman* as "At the Swamp" in 1928, this scene was, in many ways, the nucleus around which the rest of *The Invasion* would form.

beleaguered pilgrims, and a white man forced to take the place of a put-upon Squanto. A farmer called Old John returns from a day of haying with his son only to discover that a family of Ojibwe, sailing across the lake from Manitoulin Island, have been forced off the water by a storm and have occupied into his rustic cabin. John, opening the door, is taken aback by what he sees inside his own house, thinking, "My God…there was all the Indians of the country here!" The Ojibwe, who have already made a fire and have made a general survey of the contents of the house, silently invite John to sit on a bench "where they had cleared a place for him." Seemingly overcome by surprise, John glances "from figure to figure" and receiving no explanation, lapses into "a trancelike stillness, gazing steadily before him at nothing." Only after a long moment does one of the Ojibwe men "very amiably" asks John, "'This your house?'" (242).

Lewis draws a parallel between audacity of the Ojibwe occupation of John's house with the audacity of settler colonial legal claims, based as they ultimately are on a simple insistence on the right for one group of people to dispossess another. Yet, coming after more than two hundred pages describing the dispossession of the Ojibwe people, readers cannot help but see the Ojibwe's invasion-in-miniature as a justifiable reassertion of their prior aboriginal title. Confronted thus, Lewis makes John into the paradigmatic settler at the moment of traumatic confrontation with the reassertion of indigenous title. Initially conforming to his role as settler, John employs a series of disavowals and rationalizing narratives in an attempt to counter the indigenous claim of prior occupancy being made against his house. In so doing, Lewis illustrates the flimsiness of such narratives, as they fail to convince either the Indians (or even John) of his right to challenge the Indians' claim.

John's first narrative impulse is to describe his ownership of the cabin, explaining that he "built this house…about fifteen years ago." John tells the Ojibwe "you can stay as long as you like. And if anyone says you can't, you say John Porter said you could." What at first seems to be a deeply charitable offer, under closer scrutiny, proves to have a much more ambivalent significance. First, the Ojibwe's ability to stay in the cabin is predicated on acknowledging John's proper claim of ownership. Moreoever John lets the Ojibwe know they can stay only because the cabin is unfit for habitation by whites: "We used to stay here, but a year or two ago some vagabones got in here and filled it up with bugs. So we ain't used it none since" (243). Bear's band can occupy the house, but only because it is suitable only for 'vagabones'—unclean, uncivilized nomads who can only temporarily occupy territory instead of owning it. The sense that John's offer is somewhat cynical is compounded by the fact that, after receiving no acknowledgement from the Ojibwe for his offer, "he paused and turned his head aside with the movement of a man about to spit" (243).

At this point, Lewis makes a clear symbolic connection between John's narrative impulse and the unsettling presence of indigenous people, telling the reader: "At any time when he had more than a single disconnected remark to make his voice assumed a narrative tone, slightly softer and more resonant than his usual speech. It was like the steady unseeing gaze of his eyes, and it produced a certain impersonality, on the smooth ground of [sic] which figures moved." This particularly rich description shows the degree to which John's narration is an unconscious defensive reaction to a traumatic confrontation—he becomes unlike himself. This defensive reaction creates an impersonal (and depersonalizing) space between himself and the Ojibwe, which makes recognition

impossible. His narration not only produces a kind of blindness that makes him unable to recognize the Ojibwe for who the are, it also reduces the contested landscape to an unrecognizable smoothness over which the Ojibwe, reduced to abstract figures, simply glide over.

What comes out of John's mouth is not spit, however it is meant to be a disparagement of the Ojibwe: "Sundby and I, we built it. . . and pretty nearly every summer I've been down here to cut hay, to say nothing of the hours I've nigh broke my back and scraped my fingers to the bone picking these marsh berries" (243). By telling this story, John is attempting to narrate a claim to the land through the logic of proper cultivation and labor. The submerged implication of John's statement is that the Ojibwe cannot know the land—and therefor claim the land—as he does, because they do not properly labor upon it. However, this narrative claim is directly challenged by a single remark made by the Bear, who responds to John's anecdote with one word: "Mashkigimin" (244). Bear's use of mashkiigimin juxtaposed against John's 'marsh berries' undermines John's claim to the land through proper labor by asserting the prior labor of the Ojibwe. John's term for the fruit—as opposed to the more properly English 'cranberries'—both sonically and syntactically replicates the Ojibwemowin word (mashkii = bog, swamp, tamarac; gimin = berry), hinting that John's knowledge of the cranberry cultivation has an indigenous source—as, indeed, all modern cranberry cultivation does. By reminding John, and the reader, that John's difficult labor in harvesting the cranberries is not exceptionally Euroamerican, but predicated on the prior labor of Indians, Bear destabilizes John's settler colonial claim.

Having failed in trying to narrate his claim to the land through the logic of proper labor over the land, John takes a different tack, attempting to justify his claim by appealing to his moral rectitude. John radically shifts the thrust of his narrative after Bear's interjection, redirecting it toward his abstemious lifestyle. John tells the Ojibwe: "I was a railroader, and before that I worked in the stables. Yet I never laid no bet on any horse, and I never touched liquor. . . . Nor I don't smoke nor chew. By Jiminy Blue, I come to some conclusions in my life, and I hold by 'em." (244). The intent of John's speech seems inherently didactic, further evidenced by the narrator's description of the Indians "listening with great attention, the many pairs of dark eyes fastened on the white man," an image that cannot help but draw associations of the white-man's burden. Yet, Bear once again interrupts the flow of John's narrative, this time by showing John a Copenhagen snuffbox he had found in the house, in silent challenge to John's story. Confronted with evidence that someone in the house had used tobacco, John tries to deflect the accusation, showing the snuffbox to be filled with sugar and saying, "No, by Jiminy Blue…that's Sundby's, that old Swede." Yet the damage, it would seem, is done. John's evasion is met only by the Indians' laughter, "a soft ripple of amusement" at the old man's apparent hypocrisy (244).

Having exhausted his repertoire of narrative claims to the cabin, John finally seems to relent, lapsing out of his narrative posture and into silence. As he sits, his eyes—which were once "steady and unseeing"—begin to take in the landscape (along with the people upon it:

> He could look far across the fields to the fringe of small bush where Young John was going, and above hung the Mountain, a blue lake. To the north a heavy bank of cloud, blue like the Mountain, somber and cold, was gathering with speed, but left the sunset unobstructed. […] The Indians began to move about. Pitonoquod had hung his felt hat on a nail. The women were spreading quilts over the hay in the bunks. There was a little talk, the pat and shuffle of feet on boards, slowly. Old John sat very still and felt tired. (244-5)

Only once he stops talking about his ownership of the land, does it become real for John. Moreover, John's silence and stillness allows for the Ojibwe to go about their business of asserting their residency over the cabin, seemingly happy to ignore the presence of the old man—who now bears witness to their actions. Importantly, Lewis also uses Ojibwemowin to illustrate the shift. Just as the cloud begins to take possession of the landscape outside, Pitonoquod, whose name translates into 'Cloud Approaching' [Bidaanakwad], hangs his hat—an act that cannot help but recall in the reader a sense of claiming the cabin as a home. [46]

The coming clouds bear a different kind of omen for Old John, who continues to sit in silence until "the beds were made, [and] cups and plates were on the table." Once his son returns, John gives the Ojibwe all the food he has—two loaves of bread and some onions—which he did not offer to them earlier. The gift of food acts as John's reparative acknowledgement of the Ojibwe's aboriginal title. Finally, John and his son leave the

46 More subtly, Lewis recalls Waub-ojeeg's territorial sovereignty with the instantiation of another Cloud Approaching—the trespassing trapper whom Waub-ojeeg chastised earlier. In this instance, however, Lewis figures Cloud Approaching as vindicated in his trespass.

cabin to the Ojibwe: "The Indians watched them go. As they entered into the small bush, where the wagon was, the first drops of rain struck sharply on the roof, and sang, like whips, on the tin of the stovepipe. The Indians shut the door" (245). Finally, in the final pages of *The Invasion*, we have a symbolic reversal (however minor) of the seemingly inexorable onslaught of settler colonialism: the Ojibwe have regained a domestic space that they are free to manage, without interference from non-Natives. For this to happen, however, takes recognition on the part of the settler of the validity of indigenous claims *and* a willingness to relinquish his sense of sovereign entitlement. It is not simply enough to let the Indians to continue to exist, the settler must also give up (as John eventually does) dictating to Indians the proper mode of existing. Lewis does not represent this as an easy, or even very desirable, outcome for the settler—John, after all, is left exposed to the elements without food—yet one cannot escape the sense that it is correct. The recognition of Indian rights, and the subsequent relinquishment of settler colonial privileges, cannot be had without inflicting a certain amount of psychic trauma on the settler—it must be an unsettling experience.

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Old John's recognition of the Ojibwe's indigenous claim resonates with another recognition the Ojibwe of Michigan would receive a few short years after the publication of *The Invasion.* After years of concerted efforts on the part of both Native and non-Native activists, the Wheeler-Howard Act (better known as the Indian Reorganization Act, or IRA) was passed in 1934. The legislation ended the practice of allotment as well

as the oversight of federal Indian agents, recognizing the legal right for Indian tribes to exist as self-governing bodies. Importantly the IRA provided Indian tribes with the ability to buy private property and convey it into communal land held in trust—giving tribes a method by which to begin to undo the damage of centuries of dispossession. Having had their Indian status terminated by the 1855 Treaty of Detroit, however, the potential for the Ojibwe of Michigan to benefit from the IRA (which only applied to recognized tribes) initially seemed doubtful. Since the early twenties, various Ojibwe groups across northern Michigan had organized themselves in order to petition the federal government to recognize the usufructory rights to fish and game protected for them under the multiple treaties drafted prior to 1855, with only limited success. The termination clause of the 1855 treaty, in which "the tribal organization of […] Ottawa and Chippewa Indians" was "hereby dissolved," proved to be a major barrier the efforts of the Ojibwe.[47]

The situation of the Michigan Anshinaabeg radically changed when the Bureau of Indian Affairs, led by John Collier, published a memorandum that suggested that they had been incorrectly interpreting the 1855 Treaty of Detroit for nearly eighty years.[48] Instead of terminating the Indian status of the Michigan Ojibwe as a whole, the memo suggested that the framers of the treaty merely intended to sever the formal affiliation of the Ottawa and Chippewa in the region, but left their right to exist as independent nations intact. The decision opened the door for the reestablishment of Ojibwe reservations across Northern Michigan, starting with Bay Mills Indian Community in 1936, followed

47 U.S. Government. "Treaty With The Ottawa And Chippewa" Signed at Detroit, July 31, 1855. 11 Stat., 621. Ratified April 15, 1856.

48 Cleland, 70.

thereafter by the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians in 1972, the Grand Traverse Band of Chippewa and Ottawa Indians in 1980, and the Little Traverse Bay Band of Odawa in 1994. In the B.I.A.'s major policy reversal it is not difficult to see the same sort of creative misunderstanding at play as that which allowed John Johnston to recognize the sovereign authority of Waub-ojeeg a century and a half earlier. This family resemblance is not incidental, as such creative reinterpretations abound whenever a shift occurs in settler societies that allows for the potential recognition (however slight) of indigenous sovereignty. As Lorenzo Veracini explains:

> all processes of constitutional rearrangement involving indigenous constituencies in settler nations have necessitated a significant revision of traditional historical narratives and a comprehensive reinterpretation of national and/or regional pasts. Indeed, the role of historians in contributing to institutional and judicial readjustment has in some cases been decisive, and historians and other academics involved in the production of indigenous and national histories in settler societies have in some cases made history by literally (re)writing it.[49]

True Beliebers

In 1983, history was made when the Seventh Circuit of the U.S. Court of Appeals handed down its decision in the case of *Lac Courte Oreilles v. Voigt*. At stake in the case was the right of the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe to hunt and fish on the territory they had

49 Veracini, Lorenzo. *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview.* Cambridge University Press. 2010. p. 110.

ceded to the U.S. in various treaties—a right the state of Wisconsin refused to recognize. The Lac Courte Oreilles Band maintained that, during treaty negotiations in 1842, the Indian commissioner had promised that they would retain their right to live, fish and hunt on their ceded lands in perpetuity—as long as they offered no hostility to the U.S. The state argued that no record of such a promise existed in the wording of the treaty, which stated that such rights (including usufructory rights) only existed at the pleasure of the President—who had ordered the Lac Court Oreilles Ojibwe to remove to Minnesota eight years after the original treaty had been signed. The Lake Superior Ojibwe successfully resisted removal, but their right to fish and hunt on ceded lands remained in question for over a century.[50] In 1974, two Ojibwe men were arrested for spear fishing walleye through the ice on an off-reservation lake, setting off a string of legal cases that slowly wound its way to the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals in 1983. With Wisconsin's position based on written law (as opposed to the Ojibwe's 'unreliable' oral history), the court seemed poised to find in favor of the state, until a curious and obscure book was submitted into evidence that radically changed the outcome of the case.

The book was *Early Life Among the Indians*, published in 1892 by an equally curious man, Benjamin G. Armstrong. Originally a child jockey from Alabama, Armstrong had been told to seek out a cooler climate after developing a tubercular cough in his late teens. By 1840 Armstrong was living in northern Wisconsin Territory, where he was employed variously as a lumberman, trader, and store keep. One of only a handful of white settlers in the region, Armstrong grew close to the local Indians, learning fluent

50 Satz, Ronald N. *Chippewa Treaty Rights: The Reserved Rights of Wisconsin's Chippewa Indians in Historical Perspective*. Univ of Wisconsin Press, 1996. pp. 91-100.

Ojibwemowin and marrying an Indian woman—the niece of a prominent ogimaa at La Pointe, Bizhiki. Late in his life, Armstrong wrote a detailed history of his efforts as an interpreter and advocate on behalf of the Ojibwe of Bizhiki's band as they struggled to avoid relocation by an increasingly hostile U.S. government.[51] In his memoirs was a description of the treaty negotiations of 1842, which included the Indian commissioner's explicit promise to the Lake Superior Ojibwe of perpetual usufructory rights on their ceded land. Where oral history was inadmissible as evidence in the Lac Court Oreilles case, the memoirs of Armstrong were sound (even if they were written nearly half a century after the events they described), and the court found in favor of the Lac Courte Oreilles' right to hunt and fish on their own land.

In spite of the contribution American Indian literary nationalism makes toward addressing literature on its merits as work that produces, reinforces and disseminates ideology about indigenous nations it seems incapable, in its current articulation, of accounting for a work such as Armstrong's. For much of its (admittedly brief) history, criticism about Native American literature has been concerned with detailing the qualities that make a particular work of literature reflective of a distinctly Native American point of view, making the critic something like a textual ethnologist. While such work has given us a great insight into the cultural differences that fuel settler/indigenous conflict, it offers little in the way of insight into the rhetorical or representational mechanisms of the conflict itself. Moreover, in trying to identify what made a certain texts distinctively Native, such criticism has, at times, reified an idealized version of Native identity that

51 Including the illegal trip he made with Bizhiki to Washington D.C. in 1852, where they managed to meet directly with president Millard Fillmore and demand he rescind the order for the Superior Ojibwe to be removed to Minnesota—a demand to which Fillmore complied.

judges contemporary literary works against an ahistorical standard of cultural authenticity—with little regard to the social or political context in which a text was produced.

When nationalist criticism appeared in the late nineties and early 2000's, it appeared to offer a much needed corrective in its emphasis on historical context, geographic specificity, and insistence that tribes represent distinct political bodies rather than abstract ethnic affiliations. Yet, nationalist criticism seems to still carry the remnants of the previous generation's ethnographic impulse to find and elaborate on the inherent racial/culture identity of a text. As Jace Weaver explains, in his view:

> American Indian Literary Nationalism . . . [has] two prongs. The first related to the consideration of Native American literary output as separate and distinct from other national literatures. The second deals with a criticism of that literature that supports not only its distinct identity but also sees itself as attempting to serve the interests of indigenes and their communities, in particular the support of Native nations and their own separate sovereignties.[52]

I am very interested in the "but also" Weaver places between the ideas of promoting Native literature's "distinct identity" and "serv[ing] the interests of indigenes." While certainly not mutually exclusive, the two critical demands Weaver articulates may not be perfectly complimentary. For instance, how are we to read something like Stephen

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52 Weaver, Jace. "Splitting the Earth: First Utterances and Pluralist Separatism." in *American Indian Literary Nationalism*. Eds. Warrior, Weaver & Womack. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006. p. 15

Graham Jones' *It Came from Del Rio*, about a bunny-headed zombie roaming across Texas, as a novel that serves the interests of Jones' Blackfeet community? Or how the Spokane tribe's struggle to assert their sovereignty is depicted in Sherman Alexie's poem, "Ode to Mix Tapes," which is about (perhaps unsurprisingly) the art of making mixed tapes? We must ask ourselves, are these themes 'distinctly' Native? Should Justin Bieber's shaky claim of Native ancestry prove true, must we consider his *First Step 2 Forever: My Story* alongside William Apess's *Son of the Forest* as an autobiographical expression indigenous nationalism? To be more charitable, it seems that the sort of canon Weaver is trying to define is not a canon of all Native-identified writing, but those writings by Native people that seek, either implicitly or explicitly, to resist the settler colonialism.[53] When put this way, such a project seems hardly unreasonable—indeed, even necessary—but it is also a decidedly less capacious canon than the entirety of 'Native American literary output.'

Simply put: nationalist critics should be (and largely already are) interested in the books that promote indigenous nationhood. But what if such a book is written by a non-Native? Benjamin Armstrong's memoirs offer a literary and historical resource that has already (quite literally) served the interests of the Ojibwe, should his work and the role it played in the *Voigt* decision be of interest to a nationalist critic? Janet Lewis, in her rejection of settler colonialism and recognition of Ojibwe sovereignty certainly seems to promote indigenous nationhood, but should this make *The Invasion* an important book for

53 This seems to be the only way to make Weaver's use of the term 'indigenous nationalism' capacious enough to include the almost infinite (and even contradictory) interests of indigenes the world over. From mega-rich casino tribes, to impoverished Australian aboriginals, to the so-called 'uncontacted' tribes of the Amazon, perhaps the only claim that unites such a diverse group is the demand to continue to exist, as a people, on their own lands.

the Ojibwe? Is it possible to acknowledge the shared history of the White Earth land claim struggles in Winona LaDuke's *Last Standing Woman* as well as Will Weaver's troubling but hopeful *Red Earth, White Earth*?[54] I think so.

Allow me to be clear, however: I am not suggesting that Benjamin Armstrong, Janet Lewis or Will Weaver were—or somehow became—Ojibwe. Only that their efforts at emotionally and ideologically unsettling Euroamericans with their writing aligns them with the Ojibwe nation in such a way that we may reasonably call them Ojibwe nationalists. This, of course, assumes that nationalism is not an identity but an ideology, a set of political convictions about the right of certain peoples to continue to exist as self-defining, self-governing political bodies. Indigenous nationalism, at least in the literary realm, is quite simply the effort to counter the representational strategies of settler colonialism with an alternative discourse of Native continuity—biological, legal, cultural and social—that instantiates the possibility for indigenous nationhood in the mind of readers (readers who are, it must be said, mostly non-Native). As such, indigenous nationalism seems to be an ideological position open to anyone who recognizes, and advocates for, the continuity of indigenous nations—whether or not they belong to those nations. Expanding our idea of who can participate in the political project of contemporary indigenous nationalism allows us to understand settler colonialism as an ideology that—despite its strong entrenchment in settler society—non-Natives can learn to reject.

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54 Which I think is an admirable novel, in spite of its slightly hammy plot and horrifically bad made-for-TV film adaptation (which seems to have been purposefully forgotten by history). Overall, Weaver's novel offers a story of a white ally to Native people that largely (but not entirely) avoids replicating the 'great white hero' narrative familiar from films like *Dances With Wolves* and *Avatar*.

The Invasion is exceptional in its recognition of Ojibwe survivance and sovereignty. Unfortunately, such a recognition from a Euroamerican writer is also exceptionally rare. In my next chapter, I will examine how non-Natives (many of whom were Lewis's contemporaries) failed to recognize their complicity in the ongoing project of settler-colonialism, using writing (as well as material from the Ojibwe oral tradition) to present an understanding of Ojibweness locked in the irrevocable past.

3 – What is this I Promise You?

I think myths are appropriated to our experience, myths from the long distant past, but we also appropriated things that happen to us in our daily lives, very immediate things. In the oral tradition these recent appropriations have a way of becoming merged with the whole of our experience. It is a process of renewal… I think that space age terminology, for example, will become a diction in mythology and in a hundred or two years or even two hundred generations will constitute a valid part of oral tradition. I see no reason to think otherwise.

–N. Scott Momaday

It's so strange you don't remember any of your poetry.

–Nobody to William Blake, *Dead Man*

Introduction

In Gerald Vizenor's 1992 novel *Dead Voices*, the anonymous narrator (nicknamed 'Laundry') is faced with an almost impossible contradiction. Laundry is invited to listen to a series of healing stories from the urban Ojibwe shape-shifter and healer Bagese Bear, but explains: "she warned me never to publish. She cursed the dead voices of civilization, the word demons who hear no stories on the run. She praised chance and tricked the demons with dead pronouns."[1] For Laundry to write the stories down would be to strip them of their spiritual power, because, as Bagese believes, "printed books are the habits of dead voices."[2] The novel then shifts to Bagese's point of view as she narrates her

1 Vizenor, Gerald. *Dead Voices: Natural Agonies in the New World.* University of Oklahoma Press. 1992. p. 16.

2 Ibid. p. 18.

stories to Laundry. Bagese describes her power to transform, heal, and even resurrect the animals who suffer—yet manage to survive—life in the city.

Vizenor makes the metaphor of Bagese's stories absolutely clear. The animals represent a people who seem geographically and temporally displaced in the modern city: urban Indians. As John Gamber observed, "*Dead Voices* is more than a literary text; it is also a theoretical treatise" that illustrates the "potential for generative and regenerative Native American urban experience."[3] Indeed, the novel offers a powerful assertion of Native continuity and presence in the face of overwhelming colonial oppression, what Vizenor describes as "survivance." Hearing Bagese's stories, both Laundry and the reader are brought to a change in consciousness that forces a renegotiation of their understanding of Native existence, making the work a vitally important rejoinder to the almost-grotesquely ahistorical celebration of the quincentennial of Columbus's 'discovery' of the Americas the year the novel was released.

Yet, for all of its regenerative potential, the novel points to an inherent contradiction in its title, the same contradiction Laundry faces in the novel's closing chapter. The shapeshifting healer has vanished, leaving Laundry to decide whether to publish Bagese's stories against her wishes. Bagese's 'wild words' present Laundry with an effective model of urban Indian identity, making them worthy of preservation, lest they (as Bagese does) disappear forever. Yet the simple act of writing them down would force Laundry to break his promise to Bagese and, even worse, threaten to transform her stories of survivance into something they were never meant to be. Bagese's stories may

3 Gamber, John Blair. "'Outcasts and Dreamers in the Cities': Urbanity and Pollution in *Dead Voices*." *PMLA* (2007). p. 180.

die without being written, but the very act of writing them down also threatens to turn them into nothing more than the distant echo of dead voices.

Laundry's story is a compelling allegory for the problem of translating the oral tradition in writing. Due to its perception as the *sine qua non* of indigenous cultures, the stories, songs, and histories that comprise a tribe's oral tradition have an important place in indigenous politics. Relatively recent court decisions on indigenous land claims in Canada (*Delgamuukw v. British Columbia*) and Australia (*Mabo v. Queensland, Wik Peoples v. Queensland*) have recognized material from the oral tradition as a means of establishing native land title—but only once the material is made available for public scrutiny. Long understood (when considered at all) to be beneficial to indigenous politics, the translation and publication of material from indigenous oral traditions is in fact a complex activity that operates on multiple political registers—both positive and negative. As we've seen in our examination of *The Progress* and *The Invasion*, bringing the oral tradition into print has the ability to provide a powerful sense of identity useful in articulating political claims to outsiders. But publishing material from the oral tradition in writing also has potentially darker consequences, as it threatens to congeal a sense of cultural specificity into a rigid set of behaviors that work, ultimately, to reauthorize colonial power.

Where chapters one and two examined literary renderings of aadizookaanag and dibaajimowinan, this chapter will focus on translations of the third major genre of Ojibwe oral expression: nagamonan, or songs. In this chapter, I will trace the multiple poetic reworkings of translated Ojibwe songs originally published by the ethnographer Frances Densmore in the early twentieth century. I will be focusing primarily on versions of these

poems made by two poets in the mid-twentieth century: Gerald Vizenor and a Jerome Rothenberg. Situating each writer's work in the context of the mid-twentieth century federal policy of termination, I will show how translations of the Ojibwe oral tradition helped to preserve cultural memories, but also threatened to fix their meaning in a way that played into the settler-colonial expectations of Indian authenticity. I will then go on to show how Gerald Vizenor (inspired by *The Progress*) develops an interpretive strategy for presenting written translations from the Ojibwe oral tradition that attempts to avoid fixing the cultural meaning of the translations in time—a strategy he calls "a new tribal hermeneutics." Ultimately, I argue, that the Densmore translations, are not transparent representations of Ojibwe cultural identity, but act as a site at which conflicting versions of Ojibweness are produced and contested throughout the twentieth century—a process that continues to this day.

The Listener

Frances Densmore first became aware of Native music after hearing a drum group perform at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, an experience that left her "scared almost to death."[4] Her fear was understandable. Born in southern Minnesota five short years after the Dakota Uprising of 1862, Densmore doubtlessly grew up hearing tales of Indian savagery. As an Oberlin-trained musician, however, Densmore was fascinated by the curious rhythms and tones of tribal music. After reading Alice Fletcher's ethnological studies of Omaha music, Densmore was inspired to conduct her

4 Densmore, Frances. "She Heard an Indian Drum." *Frances Densmore and American Indian Music*. ed. Hoffman, Charles. Museum of the American Indian Heye Foundation. 1968. p.2

own examination of Indian music. Densmore began collecting songs by piecemeal from various Indians with whom she came into contact. Eventually, she began organizing field excursions to Ojibwe reservations in northern Minnesota in order to conduct comprehensive recording and research.

In 1906, Densmore first traveled to White Earth in order to attend the large annual pow wow celebrating the founding of the reservation. There she was introduced to two Ojibwe women who were to play an important role in her career: Julia Spears and her sister Mary English, descendants of the important Warren family.[5] Over the next decade, the two sisters acted as Densmore's fixers, informants, and translators as she studied Ojibwe music and culture. Through the sisters, Densmore was introduced to several respected members of the Midewewin—commonly called the Grand Medicine Society—a closed group of Ojibwe healers and spiritual leaders. With the assistance of the Warren sisters, Densmore was able to record several hundred Ojibwe songs from the Red Lake, Leech Lake, White Earth and Lac du Flambeau reservations between 1906 and 1909.

The enormous scope of Densmore's research was enabled by her use of a relatively new technology: the wax cylinder phonograph. Rather than going out into the field, Densmore's preferred to record her subjects in controlled environments, often setting up her equipment in the local Bureau of Indian Affairs offices, as she put it, "to free [the singers] from constraint or embarrassment, in order that the recorded song may be free and natural."[6] Not only did the phonograph let Densmore record many songs

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5 Julia Spears and Mary English were the sisters of the noted Ojibwe historian William Whipple Warren. Mary English had also been the person responsible for the staging of George Kabaosa's edition of *Hiawatha* on the reservation in 1904.

6 Densmore, Frances. *Chippewa Music I*. Government Printing Office. 1910. p. 3.

quickly, they also allowed her to transcribe both the melodies of Ojibwe songs and their lyrics at an unprecedented level of detail. From her recordings Densmore was also able to produce scores of incredible accuracy—even noting where a particular tone was slightly out of pitch (Fig. 4). In order to translate the material in the songs, she simply played back the recordings for her informants,[7] who would give her immediate word-for-word translations.

Densmore noted that in traditional Ojibwe song, the lyrics are not as important as the melody, stating: "In a succession of several renditions of a song it is not unusual to find the words occurring only once," but that these changes "did not affect the identity of the song in the mind of the Indians."[8] The only exception to this custom were the songs of the Midewewin, which were performed in exactly the same manner each time. The lyrics of such songs were of deep significance to the Mide, as they were seen to carry ritual power. As Densmore noted however, the words used in Mide songs "are unknown in the conversational Chippewa of the present time," and therefore "[t]heir literal translation is meaningless" to those without the proper ritual instruction.[9]

Mide songs were also unique in that they were often associated with a specific pictograph. According to Densmore, Mide practitioners incised such "Song Pictures" as mnemonic devices to record certain series of events or songs. The pictographs represent a kind of writing in that a Mide practitioner could, upon seeing a pictograph, immediately

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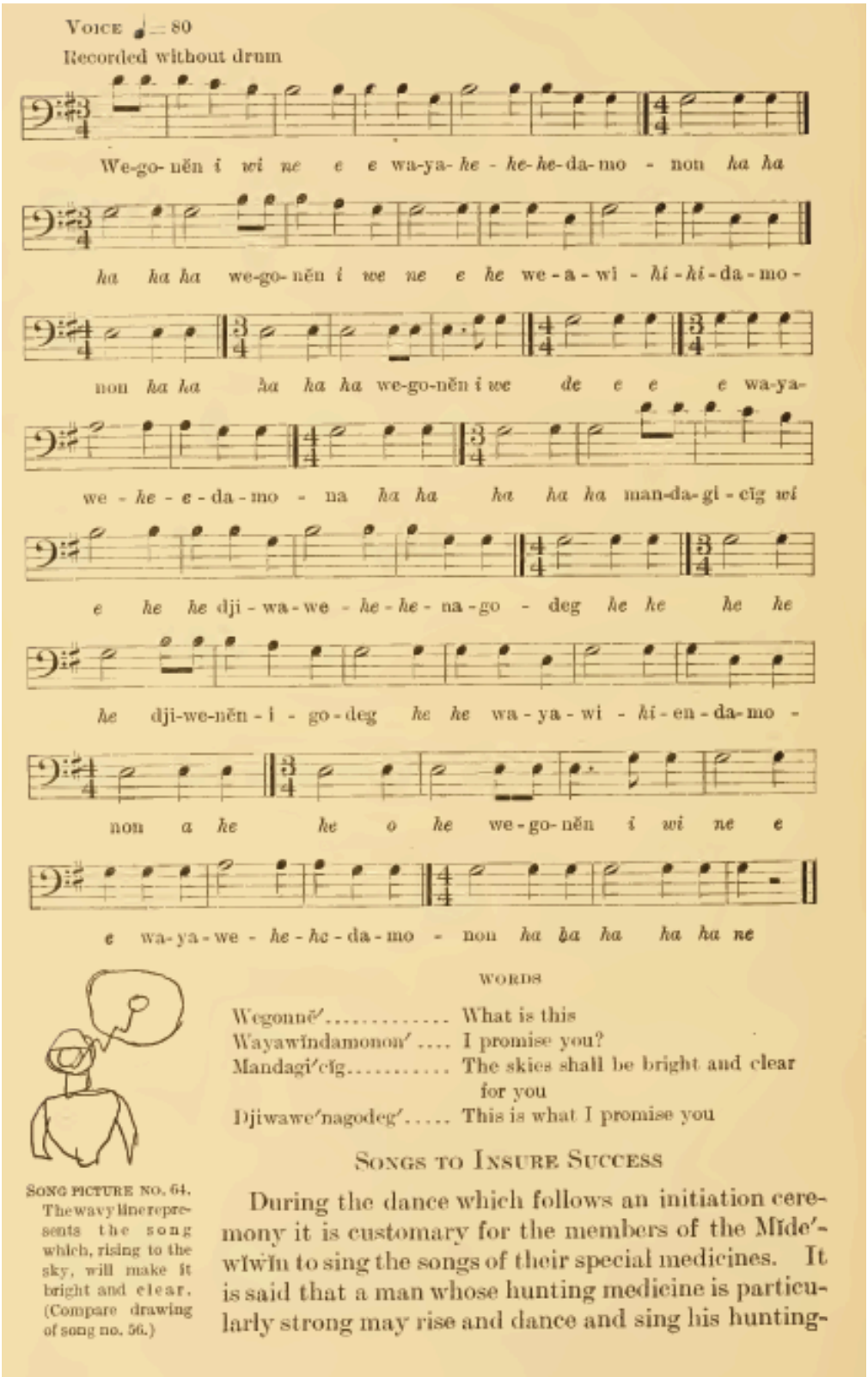
7 Interestingly, Densmore's primary interpreter was Rev. Charles H. Beaulieu—the same man who had written the Salutatory address for *The Progress.*

8 Densmore. *Chippewa Music I.* p. 2

9 Ibid. pp. 14-5.



SONG PICTURE NO. 64. The wavy line represents the song which, rising to the sky, will make it bright and clear. (Compare drawing of song no. 56.)

SONGS TO INSURE SUCCESS

During the dance which follows an initiation ceremony it is customary for the members of the Mĭde′wĭwĭn to sing the songs of their special medicines. It is said that a man whose hunting medicine is particularly strong may rise and dance and sing his hunting-

Fig. 4 - Densmore's Transcription of "Mide Initiation Song" from *Chippewa Music I*

sing the song that the pictograph represented, or conversely upon hearing a song, draw its corresponding pictograph. Densmore notes that such pictographs could be used "to express complicated ideas,"[10] but is careful to differentiate the pictographs from forms of phonetic writing. For Densmore, the abstract nature of the pictographs better captured the symbolic meaning of the song than a phonetic representation of the lyrics ever could, stating, "The Indian picture preserves the idea of the song, while our printed page preserves the words which are supposed to express the idea but which often express it very imperfectly."[11] However, the lack of phonetic representation in the pictographs meant that their ability to represent the songs was contingent on a pre-existing, shared knowledge base. A Mide follower who was not familiar with a pictograph would only be able to vaguely guess at its overall meaning, but not be able to give an exact word-for-word translation—let alone perform the song it represented.

The ancient songs of the Midewewin were of particular importance to Densmore, who saw them as both the most culturally significant of Ojibwe songs, but also the most in danger of being lost to history. Densmore understood her work as a mission of preservation, stating that she was "determined that Indian music, or the knowledge of it, should 'not perish from the earth.'"[12] Yet, Densmore's desire to preserve tribal music was hardly driven by the wish to see Ojibwe cultural practices continue. Indeed, in her publications, speeches, and letters, Densmore not only predicted the inevitable end of tribal cultural identity, but embraced it, stating:

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10 Ibid. p. 17.

11 Ibid. p. 15.

12 Densmore, Frances. "Selected Letters." in Hoffman, p. 61.

> We have conquered Nature, and what of her motherless children? We have spared their lives, but the Fate which decrees that the weaker race shall always give place to the stronger has condemned the Indian to the slow torture of degeneracy and final extinction. … The Indian warrior knew how to die, and the race today fronts its doom with the same haughty stoicism.[13]

Instead, Densmore was driven by scientific curiosity. Like many of her contemporaries, Densmore believed the complexity of cultural expression among a given people acted as an indicator of the degree of their civilization.[14] Densmore recorded Ojibwe music in order to support this theory of unilineal cultural evolution. By analyzing Ojibwe songs, she hoped to offer a window back in time so that she and ethnographers like her could gain insight into the history of human cultural and psychological development.

The result of Densmore's decade long efforts among the Ojibwe would be the dense, two-volume study *Chippewa Music*, published by the Bureau of American Ethnography in 1910 and 1913. Containing complete scores, transcripts, translations, and interpretive notes for 380 different songs, *Chippewa Music* also provided larger theoretical overviews of Ojibwe social life and Mide religious practices. The book immediately became a land-mark text in the study of American Indian music, influencing generations of future ethnomusicologists.

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13 Densmore, Frances. "The Music of the American Indians" in Hoffman, p. 10.

14 Krystyn R. Moon, "The Quest for Music's Origin at the St. Louis World's Fair: Frances Densmore and the Racialization of Music," *American Music* 28, no. 2 (2010): 191-210.

The Poets

Not long after its publication, *Chippewa Music* gained influence among a very different kind of audience. Poets, especially those associated with the American avant garde, took an immediate interest in Densmore's work. Many favorably compared the translations to Japanese Haiku. Yvor Winters (Janet Lewis's huband) declared that Densmore's translations could "take their place with no embarrassment beside the best Greek or Chinese versions of H.D. and Ezra Pound."[15] Carl Sandburg, reviewing Densmore's translations for *Poetry* magazine, even went as far as to joke, "Suspicion arises that the red man and his children committed direct plagiarism on our modern imagists and vorticists."[16]

Several other poets went even further, using the Densmore translations as stepping off points for their own 'interpretations' of tribal songs. Alice Hunter Corbin, for example, took the translated lyrics of the "Dancing Song of the Bi'jikiwuck'"—consisting entirely of the words "strike ye our land with curved horns"[17]—and expanded upon them:

Strike ye our land

With curved horns!

Now with cries

15 Winters, Yvor. *The Uncollected Essays of Yvor Winters.* ed. Francis Murphy. Swallow Press. 1973. p. 33.

16 Sandburg, Carl. "Aboriginal Poetry." *Poetry Magazine.* February, 1917. p. 255.

17 Densmore, Frances. *Chippewa Music II.* Government Printing Office. p. 102.

Bending our bodies,

Breathe fire upon us;

Now with feet

Trampling the earth,

Let your hoofs

Thunder over us!

Strike ye our land

With Curved horns![18]

While she admitted to "taking liberties with the originals," Corbin insisted that her version of Densmore's translations were "strictly within the spirit of them." Claiming that a "translation of Indian song that reads like an Elizabethan lyric gives little idea of the original" Corbin claimed her work brought out "the literary significance of the Indian songs," which "the ethnologists" (read: Densmore) had "overlooked."[19]

Corbin was actually wrong in this assessment, however, because Densmore had also reworked several of the translated songs as poems, privately publishing them in a 1917 chapbook entitled *Poems from Sioux and Chippewa Songs.* Like Corbin's, the poems of *Sioux and Chippewa Songs* were highly embellished—often many times longer than the originals—but rendered in an amateurishly romantic style:

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18 Corbin, Alice Hunter. "Buffalo Dance." *Poetry Magazine.* February, 1917. pp. 235-6.

19 Corbin, Alice Hunter. "Aboriginal Poetry." *Poetry Magazine.* February, 1917. p. 256.

No. 14. *In Her Canoe*

Literal translation: "I see her, my sweetheart, paddling her canoe."

In her canoe I see her,
Maiden of my delighted eyes.
I see in the rippling of the water
The Trailing light slipped from her paddle blade.
A signal sent to me.
Ah, maiden of my desire,
Give me a place in they canoe;
Give me the paddle blade,
And you shall steer us away
Wherever you would go![20]

With all of her characteristic literalness, Densmore presented her poetic reworkings of the Ojibwe songs as a scientific experiment: "The inspiration of the poems was a desire … to test the poetic quality of Indian songs by offering the verses themselves to those who in this manner may consider them apart from the music."[21] How Densmore believed her renditions could 'prove' the poetic qualities of the original songs must remain a matter of speculation.

20 Hoffman, p. 91.

21 Ibid. p. 86.

Densmore's translations initiated craze among the literati for all things 'Chippewa' that reached a frenzied peak in the early 1920s. As Janet Lewis and Ernest Hemingway were gaining their first tastes of fame by writing about the Ojibwe in *Indians in the Woods* (1921) and "Indian Camp" (1924), the non-Native Lew Sarett was building a literary career almost entirely on his poetic 'versions' of Ojibwe ceremonies in *Many Many Moons* (1920), *The Box of God* (1922), and *Slow Smoke* (1925). As early as 1919, T.S. Eliot mocked his fellow poets' admiration for all things Ojibwe, sarcastically suggesting that "The Chippeway has the last word in subtlety, simplicity, and poeticality."[22]

By the 1930s, however, interest in Densmore's translations waned, but never fully abated. Over the decades, poetic renditions of Ojibwe songs would be reprinted in George Cronyn's *The Path on the Rainbow* in 1919, Margot Astrov's *The Winged Serpent* in 1946, and Kenneth Rexroth's essays for *Perspectives USA* in 1956. Shortly after Densmore's death in 1957, William Carlos Williams chose to honor her memory by forgoing a dedication to his Pulitzer-winning poem "Pictures from Brueghel" (1962) and instead printing a short quotation from Densmore's seminal work, *A Study in American Indian Music*.[23] While Densmore's translations had left a lasting mark on American poetry in the early twentieth century, it would take an act of Congress to reignite interest in them.

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22 Eliot, T.S. "War Paint and Feathers." *Primitivism and Twentieth-Century Art.* Ed. Jack D. Flam and Miriam Deutch. University of California Press. 2003. p. 121.

23 Williams, William Carlos. *The Collected poems of William Carlos Williams: 19*39-62. ed.Christopher MacGowan. New Directions. p. 504. The quotation was: "…the form of a man's rattle may be in accordance with instructions received in the dream by which he obtained his power."

Two Foxes

By the mid-20th century, American Indians were facing the worst political and cultural crisis since the passage of the Dawes Act. Beginning in 1943, the U.S. Congress began investigating the possibility of terminating the trust relationship between the federal government and Indian tribes. With the passage of House concurrent resolution 108 on August 1st 1953, Congress made its position explicit:

> It is the policy of congress, as rapidly as possible, to make the Indians within the territorial limits of the United States subject to the same laws and entitled to the same privileges and responsibilities as are applicable to other citizens of the United States, to end their status as wards of the United States, and to grant them all the rights and perogatives pertaining to American citizenship[24]

Declaring that, "the Indians within the territorial limits of the United States should assume their full responsibilities as American citizens,"[25] the resolution called for the eventual cessation of tribal self-government and the end of federal trusteeship over Indian land and resources—actions that would effectively abrogate every existing Indian treaty in the U.S. Two weeks after passing HR108, Congress began divesting the federal government of responsibility to Indian peoples by passing Public Law 280, which

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24 Prucha, Francis Paul. *Documents of United States Indian Policy.* University of Nebraska Press. p. 234.

25 Ibid.

unilaterally granted several state governments complete jurisdiction over criminal and civil cases involving Indians residing on reservation land. In an effort to speed up the assimilation of Native people into Euroamerican society, Congress began paying for Indians between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five living on reservations to move to urban areas where they would no longer fall under the jurisdiction of federal Indian law. By the official end of the Termination era in 1973, 109 tribal nations had been dissolved—resulting in the cessation of federal benefits and protections (including healthcare, food, and housing assistance) for 13,263 Native people, and the loss of over a million of acres of tribally-owned land.[26] Over 100,000 Native people were relocated to urban centers between 1951 and 1973, however many eventually returned to their home communities.[27]

Somewhat paradoxically, the aggressive policies of the Termination Era have been understood to have been the catalyst for a mid century renaissance of tribal cultural identity. In an effort to avoid termination, Native communities across the country began to assert their cultural particularity, reviving their languages, reinstating various subsistence practices, and performing religious rites long hidden from public view. The cultural revitalization was meant to illustrate the refusal of these tribal communities to assimilate to Euroamerican life—exactly what termination policy hoped to promote. Relocated Indians also began to reassert their tribal (and pan-tribal) identities as a means of drawing attention to their lack of civil rights, ultimately creating the basis for the National Indian Youth Council and the American Indian Movement. By the mid-1960s,

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26 Prucha, Francis Paul. *The Great Father: United States Government and the American Indians.* University of Nebraska Press. 1995. p. 351.

27 Fixico, Donald Lee *Urban Indian Experience in America*. University of New Mexico Press. p. 25.

Indians across the United States were engaged in the project of cultural revival, the effort to show that modern Indians were still like their ancestors: culturally coherent, spiritually engaged, and—most importantly—politically separate.

Gerald Vizenor would come of age as both a writer and a thinker in the midst of this sea-change. Born in Minneapolis in 1934, Vizenor lived apart from his family's home community at White Earth for the majority of his youth. Largely raised by his paternal grandmother, Alice Beaulieu, Vizenor's early days were marked by loss—the murder of his father, abandonment by his mother, and the accidental death of his step-father. At a young age Vizenor joined the National Guard, and then the U.S. Army. He spent two years stationed in Japan as part of the U.S. occupation force where he learned to write haiku—a form that would become his signature poetic style. After returning, he took advantage of the G.I. bill to attend college. By 1965, Vizenor was both attending graduate school at the University of Minnesota and working at the American Indian Employment and Guidance Center in Minneapolis—a job that gave him particular insight into the challenges faced by Indians who had relocated off the reservation.

Vizenor likely first encountered Densmore's translations in the course of his graduate studies in the early sixties. Densmore's texts offered an important literary heritage for Vizenor, who had already published two volumes of haiku, but had not yet addressed Native themes in his writing. Vizenor was particularly drawn to Densmore's translations of 'dream songs'—songs based on images from taken from the composer's dreams. Densmore's translations of such songs already seemed like compact, impressionistic poems—very similar to Vizenor's own haiku. For example, compare one

of Vizenor's early haiku poems (published in 1962) with Densmore's translation of a song originally performed by an Ojibwe man named A'jide'gijig. First Vizenor:

In the dark grass
Her gentle hands alight,
Two fireflies.[28]

Second, Densmore's translation of A'jide'gijig:

they face each other
two foxes
I will sit between them[29]

Vizenor published a chapbook of his lyric renditions of the Densmore texts, entitled *The Summer in the Spring: Lyric Poems of the Ojibway*, in 1965. Vizenor's reworkings did not stray far from the original translations, largely keeping the wording and structure of the poems as close to the original as possible:

Two foxes
They face each other.

28 Originally printed in *Raising the Moon Vines,* reprinted in Vizenor, Gerald. *Shadow Distance: A Gerald Vizenor Reader.* Wesleyan University Press. p. 17

29 Densmore. *Chippewa Music II.* p 268.

Between them

I will sit.[30]

Vizenor's project of recuperating an Ojibwe poetic tradition from Densmore's texts seems to have been an effort, in part, to articulate a literary identity for himself as a Native poet at a time in which Native cultural pride was at an historically low point. In his introduction to the collection, Vizenor declares: "The first American imagist poets were the American Indians,"[31] a strong claim that would allow him to present his own imagistic poetry as part of a historical Ojibwe tradition—not an imitation of earlier American modernists.

The recovery and publication of Ojibwe songs by Vizenor marks an early manifestation of the intense Native cultural revival that would mark the next decade, a period that would see the publication of important literary works such as Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* (1968) and *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (1969), James Welch's *Riding the Earth Boy 40* (1971) and *Winter in the Blood* (1974), as well as Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* (1977). As Native authors gained increased recognition, so too did the political struggles of Native peoples enter into the public's consciousness. With the occupation of Alcatraz in 1969-71, the Trail of Broken Treaties and the raiding of BIA offices in 1972, and the Wounded Knee stand off in 1973,

30 Vizenor, Gerald. *Summer in the Spring: Lyric Poems of the Ojibway*. Nodin Press. 1965, p. 62.

31 Ibid. p. 12.

American Indians and their struggles captured the public's imagination—leading to an intense resurgence of interest in tribal cultures and histories.[32]

Out of this milieu emerged *Shaking the Pumpkin: Traditional Poetry of the North Americas,* published by the non-Native poet Jerome Rothenberg in 1972. The book was a collection of poems Rothenberg had 'reworked' from the oral traditions of the indigenous peoples of North America—including several of the Ojibwe dream songs Vizenor had published in *Summer in the Spring*. This new collection continued Rothenberg's work in *Technicians of the Sacred* (1968) of presenting "primitive or tribal" literature in so-called "total translation," an approach to interpreting the oral narratives and songs from various tribal people in such a way that the "full & total experience" of the original oral performances could be represented in printed English. Rothenberg's figuration of total translation is based on the assumption that "Everything in these song-poems is finally translatable: words, sounds, voice, melody, gesture, event, etc., in the reconstitution of a unity that would be shattered by approaching each element in isolation."[33] In the forty years since their publication, Rothenberg's formally inventive translations have become touchstones for an entire generation of avant-garde poets.

Shaking the Pumpkin has also proven to be an exceptionally controversial document. The most vocal criticism of Rothenberg's work came from Native poets—most notably Leslie Marmon Silko, Geary Hobson, Chrystos, and Wendy Rose, who have

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32 Indeed, during this period both Cronyn's *The Path on the Rainbow* and Astrov's *The Winged Serpent* were brought back into print (in 1970 and 1972, respectively).

33 Rothenberg, Jerome. "Total Translation: An Experiement in the Presentation of American Indian Poetry." *Pre-Faces & Other Writings.* New Directions. 1981. p. 91.

variously charged Rothenberg with insensitivity, appropriation, and religious fraud.[34]A rigorous critique of Rothenberg's translational practice came from the critics William Bevis and William Clements, both of whom took Rothenberg to task for presenting his work as 'Traditional Poetry of the North Americas,' a title that Bevis described as "certainly misleading and perhaps opportunistic."[35] Bevis pointed out that Rothenberg's translations not only deviated widely from the original sources "but translate with impunity from one genre (chant to lyric, impromptu oral statement to lyric) and even from one medium (action and painting to words) to another."[36]

Clements' criticism was even more pointed, calling *Shaking the Pumpkin* "a dangerous book, which perpetuates alarming misconceptions about the nature of Native American verbal art."[37] For Clements, the major flaw of Rothenberg's work was the fact that his 'total translations' were based on pre-existing texts—mostly translations made by late nineteenth and early twentieth century ethnographers—the results of which "seem to reflect what Jerome Rothenberg feels Native American oral poetry should be rather than

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34 The success of *Technicians of the Sacred* and *Shaking the Pumpkin* lead to influx of what Geary Hobson called "whiteshamans" non-Natives who presented themselves as poet-priests with disingenuous claims of possessing indigenous spiritual knowledge. But Rothenberg has always been careful to distinguish himself from the whiteshamanism movement—claiming his work is more interested in revealing the underlying poetry of Native oral traditions, rather than in expressing indigenous religious beliefs. In the introduction of *Shaking the Pumpkin*, Rothenberg says that no reader should expect to find in his translations a "spirit-of-a-people etc," explaining "the best remains untold or its powers reserved for those who 'have ears to hear' etc. But the rest of us have to begin somewhere." Such a caveat would appear to safely isolate Rothenberg from any charge of whiteshamanism, as he makes no claims to represent Native spirituality in himself.

35 Bevis, Williams. "American Indian Verse Translations." *College English.* Vol. 35 no. 6. March 1974. p. 700.

36 Ibid. p. 694.

37 Clements, William. "Faking the Pumpkin: On Jerome Rothenberg's Literary Offenses." *Western American Literature.* Vol. XVI, no. 1. Spring 1981. p. 194.

what it actually is or was."[38] Like Bevis, Clements accused Rothenberg of not paying enough deference to the generic specificity of the original material, particularly the Densmore translations, stating:

> These texts are indeed songs; as such, their melodies are as vital as their words. The absence of any musicological indications prevents the reader from appreciating the integrity of the performance of this material as song. One can certainly make no claims of having achieved 'total translation' when elements essential to depicting the nature of oral performance are ignored.[39]

Uncomfortably, many of the accusations of inauthenticity that Bevis and Clements level at *Shaking the Pumpkin* could also apply to *Summer in the Spring*. Vizenor's book, like Rothenberg's, is comprised of Vizenor's reworkings of Densmore's already translated texts.[40] Like Rothenberg, Vizenor conflates different genres, describing his lyric poems as Ojibwe songs, and vice versa, despite the incommensurability of the two forms. Given their similarities, one is tempted to ask if we are to criticize *Shaking the Pumpkin* for its inauthenticity, must we then also consider *Summer in the Spring* an equally compromised text?

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38 Ibid. p. 195.

39 Ibid. p. 203.

40 Vizenor, a vocal critic of essentialist thinking, certainly would not believe that the historical contingency of his being born Ojibwe entitles him to a better understanding than Rothenberg of the cultural material both present.

Comparing Vizenor and Rothenberg at the level of language and presentation of a single poem, it certainly seems that we might. The original song, collected by Densmore as item number 64 "Initiation Song," was sung by Gichi Makwa (Big Bear), a member of the Midewewin healing society. Densmore's translator gave it in English thus:

> What is this
> I promise you?
> The skies shall be bright and clear for you
> This is what I promise you[41]

In the 1965 version of *Summer*, the poem appears with the title "Mide Initiation Song". The poem appears nearly exactly as it was translated in *Chippewa Music*—as does every other poem in the collection. Indeed, Vizenor explains in an interpretive note that "Most of the Ojibway words in this song were obscure" (1965 #) and therefore he closely followed the Densmore translation, only regularizing the line breaks and inserting the word "Spring" to reflect the season of Midewiwin initiation:

> What is this
> I promise you?
>
> The Spring skies

41 Densmore. *Chippewa Music I.* p. 82.

Will be bright

And clear for you.

This is what

I promise you.[42]

Rothenberg's translation also closely follows Densmore's prose rendition, albeit in far more informal language:

know what I'll promise you?

skies be bright & clear for you

that's what I'll promise you"[43]

At the level of the language, the differences between Vizenor and Rothenberg's poems are minor. At most, one may say that Rothenberg's use of highly informal language adds a sort of plebeian Red English exoticism to the poem that is troubling, but hardly changes the overall meaning. Vizenor, for his part, goes in an opposite direction, using capitalization and formal punctuation to lend the text a certain gravitas. While their revisions may have different implications, neither departs widely from Densmore's original text. However, when one stops examining Rothenberg and Vizenor's poems as

42 Vizenor. *Summer* (1965). p. 25.

43 Rothenberg, Jerome. *Shaking the Pumpkin: Traditional Poetry of the Indian North Americas.* University of New Mexico Press. p. 272.

discrete units, and examines how each writer situates his poems contextually, different readings become accessible. It is through this wider contextual focus that one begins to see how Rothenberg and Vizenor's projects encode two utterly dissimilar philosophical approaches to translating the Ojibwe oral tradition.

Unlike Vizenor, Rothenberg's translation prominently features the pictograph Densmore originally published with the song (Fig. 5). As Densmore explains in her notes, the pictograph illustrates both the content and the intent of the song: the line that emerges from the figure's mouth is the song itself, which travels upwards to clear the sky, represented as a circle above the figure's head. Interestingly in a note to his version of the poem, Rothenberg contravenes Densmore, claiming that the Mide were able to "read-out" pictographs. Moreover, he insists that the pictographs contained extra-representational semantic meaning—that is, the image did not just illustrate the song, but conveyed information the song itself did not.[44]

In his insistence on privileging the signifier over the signified, Rothenberg legitimizes his project of total translation by anachronistically making Ojibwe culture always-already graphematic. Indeed, one may even be able to say that Rothenberg's presentation of the poem invites the reader to see the text as an explanation of the pictograph, rather than the other way around. In essence, Rothenberg presents the pictograph as a text that can be read, rather than as symbols that can only be interpreted with the right kind of knowledge. In essence, this is not dissimilar to Ezra Pound's ideogrammic method, in which the visual presentation of Chinese characters allow a viewer tuned to the correct interpretive frequency to comprehend their meaning across

44 Rothenberg. *Shaking.* p. 405.

SONG PICTURE NO. 64

know what I'll promise you?
skies be bright & clear for you
that's what I'll promise you

Fig. 5 - "Song Picture No. 64" from *Shaking the Pumpkin*

language and culture. This sort of interpretive logic inheres the visual object with a meaning that is not contingent, negotiable, or fluid—but fixed in a way that places it outside of time.

For his part, Vizenor has expressed skepticism about Rothenberg's project, stating, "I don't think the oral tradition can be translated well but I think it can be reimagined and reexpressed."[45] For Vizenor, the impossibility of translating the oral tradition has almost nothing to do with crossing the barriers of language, but everything to do with moving from one technology of expression to another. Stating that "Written languages and translations were contradictions in most tribal communities," Vizenor argues that English and the written word were not neutral for the Ojibwe, but rather, imposed and deeply compromised modes of expression. However, when tribal cultures and languages were threatened with total annihilation in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, writing their traditional stories and songs in English provided the Ojibwe with "chances to overcome tragic reason and the loss of tribal memories."[46]

The transformation from oral to written was chancy because, as Vizenor puts it, "The translation from the heard to the written is a transvaluation of the heard to the seen, the listener once, the reader evermore." In other words, such translations risked permanently eliminating the most important aspect of oral literature: its infinite adaptability. In oral cultures there is no single definitive text against which future utterances can be judged. Nothing, in the most literal sense, is set in stone. The shape and

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45 Neal Bowers, Charles Silet, Gerald Vizenor. "An Interview with Gerald Vizenor." *MELUS.* Vol. 8 no. 1. Spring 1981. p. 49.

46 Vizenor, Gerald. *Summer in the Spring: Anishinaabe Lyric Poems and Stories, New Edition*. University of Oklahoma Press. 1993. pp. 3-4.

content of cultural expression is always fluid—bound by convention to be sure, but a convention that is always being negotiated. The specific words may change, sometimes radically, but the overall shape of oral expression remains relatively stable. By recording an utterance from the oral tradition in writing, however, one immediately and irreversibly creates an a standard against which future oral expressions can be judged, even if the written utterance was chosen arbitrarily from an infinite number of possible variations.

While this may seem like philosophical hair-splitting, the relationship between such vague abstractions as culture, authenticity and time took on real political urgency for indigenous peoples in mid-twentieth century America. The Termination era marked a subtle, but profound shift in the philosophical basis of Federal Indian policy. For the first time in its history, the U.S. began to articulate an understanding of tribal sovereignty based on the recognition of cultural difference, rather than legal or historical precedent. Tribes that were deemed sufficiently 'acculturated'—meaning, usually, those who had most thoroughly adopted Christianity, the English language, and free market capitalism—were the first to be terminated. In essence, Congress and the Bureau of Indian Affairs targeted specific tribal nations based on the degree to which they perceived these tribes to be no longer authentically Indian.

By tying indigenous political rights to the performance of historically traditional cultural practices, however, the U.S. state created an irresolvable paradox—in order to continue to exist in modernity Indigenous communities had to behave as if modernity itself did not exist. As anthropologist and political theorist Beth Povinelli explains, such recognitive politics are explicitly meant to erode indigenous rights because it allows the state to "always already constitutes indigenous persons as failures of indigeneity as

such."[47] Indeed, as Povenelli argues, indigenous political subjectivity can only exist as a product of colonial dispossession:

> To be indigenous … requires passing through, and in the passage being scarred by the geography of the state and topography of other social identities. Producing a present-tense indigenousness in which some failure is not a qualifying condition is discursively and materially impossible. These scars are what Aborigines are, what they have.[48]

The cunning of recognition, as Povenelli calls it, is two fold: by placing the burden on Indigenous peoples to constantly rearticulate their cultural authenticity, the settler state can both suppress its own complicity in the violent repression of indigenous cultural practices, *and* further erode indigenous legal rights.[49]

Ethnographic texts like Densmore's play a central role in the politics of recognition. By appearing to give an accurate, scientific definition of what constitutes (or at least constituted) authentic indigenous cultural practice, ethnography provides the settler-state with a standard of authentic indigenous behavior against which contemporary Native people can be judged. Yet, according to the Ojibwe anthropologist Gail Gutherie

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47 Povinelli, Elizabeth. *The Cunning of Recognition: Indigenous Alterities and the Making of Australian Multiculturalism.* Duke University Press. 2002. p. 39.

48 Ibid. p. 49.

49 As a minor example of this phenomenon, take Minnesota's former-governor Jesse Ventura, who declared in 1999 that if the Ojibwes of Minnesota wished to maintain their treaty rights to subsistence fishing, "then they ought to be back in birch-bark canoes instead of 200-horsepower Yamaha engines with fish finders" (qtd. in Bruyneel xii). Note how it is the Ojibwe who must satisfy *Ventura's* standards for proper cultural behavior in order to retain their treaty rights.

Valaskakis, the idea that a text like Densmore's can act in any meaningful way as a repository for uncontaminated, authentic Indigenous culture can be nothing more than a fantasy. As Valaskakis explains, the legacy of colonial violence and dispossession means that "both what anthropologists know about Indian practices and what Indians know of the traditional are equally perforated."[50] Indeed, by the time Densmore made her recordings, the White Earth Ojibwe had already experienced nearly two centuries of Euroamerican colonization, including boarding schools, missionization, and land allotment. The idea that the songs were not influenced by this colonial history is almost unimaginable. Moreover, Valiskakis argues that the inherent limitations of text keep Densmore's translations from ever capturing the critically-important social context in which the songs were originally performed. As Valiskakis argues, "In Densmore's report, there can be no smell of buckskin and woodsmoke, no soul-searing sound of the drums, or piercing voice of the singers, no collective motion of the dancers."[51] In short, while the Densmore texts may act as "an enormously valuable goad to our personal and public memories," *Chippewa Music* remains "essentially a dictionary of historical songs—obscure, distant, and lifeless."[52]

Yet it is precisely what Rothenberg claims do—presenting his translation as conveying the 'full & total' experience of the original performance—and, in so doing, recapitulating the recognitive logic of Termination. Because the total meaning of the song is meant to inhere within the pictograph, anyone should be able to gain access to the total

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50 Gail Guthrie Valaskakis, *Indian Country: Essays on Contemporary Native Culture*. Wilfrid Laurier University Press. 2005. pp. 184-5.

52 Ibid. p. 195.

experience of the song—with almost no prior knowledge of the cultural, material or linguistic context of its enunciation. Such an assumption would mean that if a modern Ojibwe, like Valiskakis, reads the poem but cannot comprehend its meaning, it would not be due to the coercive legacy of colonial violence, but simply to a lack of will. In treating written texts as portals through which one may access the cultural and epistemological lives of pre-contact tribal people, Rothenberg's project of total translation makes an implicit claim that indigenous peoples were not stripped of their traditions, but that they simply abandoned them to gather dust in the archive.

Yet Vizenor's work, too, seems to embrace the rhetoric of authenticity. In it strict adherence to Densmore's literal translations as well as a continual conflation of written poems as Ojibwe 'songs' in its introduction, the 1965 version of *Summer in the Spring* certainly seems to make a similar, if less explicit, assumption about the inherent translatability of the Ojibwe oral tradition. Both *Summer in the Spring* and *Shaking the Pumpkin* seem, then, to be products of their time. Just as Native and non-Natives contested over the cultural authenticity of indigenous communities during the Termination era, Vizenor and Rothenberg did the same on the page. The results of both contests were the same: reifying a version of tribal identity tied to tradition, and unaccommodating to change.

The 1965 version of *Summer in the Spring,* however, was but the first of four subsequent editions (printed in 1970, 1981, and 1993, respectively) that Vizenor would publish. In these new editions, Vizenor challenges the discourse of authenticity by offering increasingly different renditions of the Densmore texts. [53] By juxtaposing

53 Take, for example, "The Song of Manabozho," which appeared in 1965 thus:

translations together, matching the poems with unrelated pictographs, and publishing the poems in the same volume as Beaulieu's translations, Vizenor embraces to a strategy of supplementarity that works to undermine the definitiveness of Densmore's translations. Taken as a single project, the four volumes of *Summer in the Spring* trace a transformative arc in Vizenor's poetic reexpression of the Ojibwe oral tradition: beginning as accurate reproductions of Densmore's texts, but eventually becoming expressions of Vizenor's own poetic sensibility. Through this transformation we can see how Vizenor articulates a method of reexpressing Densmore's texts that lends them a kind of flexibility and adaptability that is similar to (but not exactly like) that of the oral tradition. Returning to a primary orality is impossible for what Vizenor, but by constantly supplementing, reinterpreting and retranslating historical anthropological texts, one may resist the sort of transhistorical indigeneity the graphematic nature of ethnographic texts produce by overwhelming it with conflicting versions—tearing apart the colonial archive with the shrapnel-like fragments of culture it seeks to contain.

Do not look
Or your eyes
Will always
Be red. (72)

In 1970, the poem appeared simply as "manabozho song":

dance and sing
across the water
if you open your eyes
they will turn red (103)

A New Tribal Hermeneutics

Vitally important to Vizenor's changing perceptions would be Theo Beaulieu's translations of Ojibwe stories originally printed in *The Progress.* Every subsequent edition of *Summer in the Spring* after 1965 would comprised of both Vizenor's renditions of the Densmore translations, as well as Theo Beaulieu's translations of the dibaajimowinan and aadizookaanag. These, unlike the poems, Vizenor does not revise at all (save for his addition of several words of Ojibwemowin). Vizenor's willingness to make radical revisions to Densmore's texts while leaving Beaulieu's relatively untouched is telling. Unlike Densmore's translations, Beaulieu's texts already exist as fully-realized literary objects. Beaulieu's texts are meant to act as a model of interpreting the oral tradition in writing, rather than a source of raw material. A short time after the release of *anishinabe adisokan*, Vizenor made this role explicit, describing the Beaulieu texts as representing a "new tribal hermeneutics"[54]—a method of interpreting the oral tradition in writing that privileged creativity and personal expression over fidelity to the source material. Such an interpretive strategy embraces non-indigenous literary genres, such as the novel, the lyric, and the epic, as forms for reexpressing material from the oral tradition in writing, but does so self-consciously—understanding that there is no direct correspondence between the novel and the aadizookaan or the lyric and the nagamon.

There is a recognition in Vizenor's articulation of the new tribal hermeneutics that recasting material from and indigenous genre into a non-indigenous genre means supplementing the material being presented with a significance it may not have had before. When engaged in an active manner, a translator (or more properly reinterpreter)

54 Vizenor, Gerald. *Summer* (1993). p. 13.

of oral material can productively draw on these associations. For instance, when a nagamon is presented as a lyric poem, it will call upon the historical and cultural associations of the lyric tradition—which has little to do with the traditional form of the nagamon. By associating the nagamon with the lyric, an interpreter like Vizenor draws on that form as a prestige mode of cultural expression, and what was once a piece of folk music becomes an articulation of an Ojibwe high literature.[55] What is important to remember, however, is that the relationship between the form of the original material and the form into which it is reexpressed is always artificial—moving from one form to another requires a huge degree of interpretation and intervention.

The relationship between Beaulieu's formal interventions and Vizenor's may be difficult to discern, as their texts trace opposite trajectories in terms of form, yet both work toward the same political goal: articulating an Anishinaabe identity capable of existing in modernity. Both interventions are carried out to reexpress the oral tradition according to the conventions of written literary forms that are non-indigenous to the Anishinaabe in order to better leverage the political benefits of turning 'low' ethnic cultural expressions (folktales and folksongs) into 'high' national cultural forms (the novel and poetry). Whereas Beaulieu's reexpressions of the Wenabozho stories move toward

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55 This is very similar to what Robert Dale Parker describes as the motivation for non-Natives, such as Dell Hymes and a Jerome Rothenberg, to present Native song as poetry. As Parker explains:

> The real purpose, I suggest, of presenting traditional Indian oral narrative as poetry or verse is polemical and canonizing. In the social ideology of genre, verse and poetry have canonical status and even an elite class status. If their elite status can be claimed for traditional Indian oral narrative, then the status of traditional narrative (and those who study it) can be raised, but at the cost of complicity with a discourse of colonizing appropriation (85).

I modify Parker's argument with the proviso that attempting to claim an elite status for tribal oral materials need not always be complicit with "the discourse of colonizing appropriation," but can instead be seen as a self-conscious effort (as it seems to be in Vizenor) to articulate a tribal history of 'high' literary production.

greater coherence, structure and causality in order to adhere better to the conventions of novelistic fiction, Vizenor's reexpressions move toward a greater indeterminacy, polysemy and openness that reflect better the conventions of poetry—particularly the poetic form of haiku.

As already noted, at the time of their publication, many had commented on the similarity of Densmore's transcriptions of Ojibwe dream songs with Japanese haiku. Prior to publishing *Summer in the Spring* in 1965, Vizenor had worked extensively in form, having learned it as a member of the U.S. Navy stationed in Japan. Kimberly Blaeser explains that haiku, as a form, operates as an "open text," which she defines as "a text that works by suggestion, implication, absence, allusion, and juxtaposition, that works through intentional gaps, indeterminacy in various forms, and the practice of many kinds of restraint in language." Blaeser believes that Densmore's transcriptions are similarly 'open texts,' but is quick to point out that there is a "central question about whether the Japanese quality was inherent in the original Ojibway dream songs or merely 'crept into' Densmore's translations."[56]

Vizenor, as an artist, operates outside of this discourse of authenticity: if Densmore's Japanese style is incidental, his is purposeful. Vizenor definitively embraces a haiku-like poetry as the literary model for his reexpressions, as can be seen in his treatment of a text that originally appeared as "Song of the Crows" in *Chippewa Music.* In the 1965 version of *Summer,* the wording of the song is almost unchanged from the Densmore translation:

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56 Blaeser, pp. 119, 110.

The first to come

I am called

Among the birds.

The rain I bring

Crow is my name.[57] (1965, 19)

In *Anishinabe Nagamon*, the same poem appears in an altered form, without a title, using more sophisticated—and polysemic—language:

the first to come

epithet among the birds

bringing the rain

crow is my name[58]

While the theme of the poem remains the same, the *Anishinabe Nagamon* version of "Song of the Crows" opens itself to a greater number of possible readings – reading which had previously been foreclosed by the formal elements of punctuation and vocabulary. Where the punctuation in the 1965 version of the poem created enjambment that forced a linear relationship between one line and the next, Vizenor's removal of

57 Vizenor. *Summer* (1965). p. 19.

58 Vizenor. a*nishinabe nagamon.* p. 43.

punctuation imparts each of the lines with an element of conceptual autonomy. Each line can now be read as an individual unit, a paratactical movement from one idea to another. Moreover, by dividing the text into two stanzas, Vizenor creates an ambiguous relation between the two halves of the poem—calling to mind haiku's aesthetic hallmark: the ambiguous juxtaposition of to related images.

Vizenor's updated version of the poem also does not shy away from a more sophisticated vocabulary than is found in Densmore's translations. By using the semantically-charged “epithet” rather than the explanatory “I am called,” Vizenor creates an even greater indeterminacy in the poem, leading to several possible readings. The crow may be called “the first to come” as a name, or the name of the crow itself may be a term of abuse. At the same time, the use of a word of such cosmopolitan etymology as “epithet” allows Vizenor to address the conceptual limits of Densmore's transcriptions. For the sake of clarity and accuracy, Densmore’s translations rely on a very simple English which inherently prohibits the expression of sophisticated thought. By introducing complex language into the poems, Vizenor works against the construction of the Ojibwe as a primitive people incapable of expressing themselves in such a refined and 'civilized' manner.

All of these changes work to transform the Densmore transcription into an “open text,” but the most explicit formal shift in Vizenor's revision of the poem is his effacement of the pronoun 'I' in order to bring his reexpression in line with the literary conventions of haiku. As Vizenor observes, similarities do exist between Ojibwe dream songs and haiku, but there is a distinct difference: “ego in dream songs . . . is dominant;

in haiku, of course, it's much more subtle."[59] Like the poem above, Patricia Haseltine notes that throughout the post-1965 versions of the reexpressions, Vizenor "has removed or deemphasized the first person pronoun in some of the poems . . . making [them] closer to the haiku."[60] The deletion of the first person pronoun from the songs demonstrates that Vizenor's interest is not in preserving an historically authentic utterance, but rather in attempting to imagine the song as haiku.

By the time Vizenor publishes the later editions of *Summer in the Spring* (1981, 1993), he fully embraces the texts as products of his own imagination, removing any traces of Densmore's ethnographic categorization. Vizenor arranges the poems in the collections not according to imposed categories, but rather, his artistic desires—creating aesthetically and thematically fruitful juxtapositions of songs. In the 1981 version of *Summer,* the 1970 "Song of the Crows" is paired on the page with a shorter poem:

the first to come
epithet among the birds
bringing the rain
crow is my name

my music

59 Bowers, Silet, and Vizenor, "Interview," p. 42.

60 Haseltine, Patricia. "The Voices of Gerald Vizenor: Survival Through Transformation." *American Indian Quarterly.* Vol. 9, no. 1. Winter 1985. p. 32.

reaching to the sky[61]

Vizenor includes nothing on the page or in the interpretive notes to indicate whether the reader should approach this text as separate poems or merely two stanzas of one larger lyric. However, this revision brings the poem closer to the "open text" of the Haiku, by once again recalling the practice of ambiguous juxtaposition. Vizenor uses this juxtaposition to lead each text toward a greater openness as the reader contemplates the implied relationship of the poems, and, indeed, every other poem in the collection.

The juxtaposition of Vizenor's reexpressions with the Beaulieu translations are also tied to Vizenor's haiku practice. Beaulieu's translation of Day-Dodge and Say-cose-gay's dibaajimowinan offer important context for the poems of *Anishinaabe Nagamon,* particularly regarding their place in Anishinaabe cosmological beliefs and social life, such as the importance of dreams, the ability of animals to communicate with humans, and the great healing power of the Midewiwin. Employed in this way, the Beaulieu stories act in a similar fashion to Vizenor's "haiku envoys," described as "a prose concentration and discourse on the images and sensations" of his haiku poems, which he uses to express the connections between "haiku sensations and tribal survivance." Vizenor explains, "practice combines my experiences in haiku with natural reason in tribal literature," creating "a new haiku hermeneutics."[62] Like his haiku envoys, the Beaulieu texts work to situate the dream-song poems in a specific social context for the Anishinaabe of the 19th century—the kind of social context lacking from both

61 Vizenor. *Summer* (1981). p. 25.

62 Vizenor, Gerald. "The Envoy to Haiku." *Chicago Review.* Vol. 39, no. 3. 1993. p. 60.

Rothenberg and Densmore's treatments of the songs.

We can see this process by returning to the “Initiation Song” as it appears in 1970's *Anishinabe Nagamon.* In this new version the wording of the poem is significantly reworked by Vizenor, and appears without a title or punctuation:

what is this i promise you
he hi hi hi
the sky
will be bright and clear
for you
this is what i promise you
ho ho ho ho[63]

The most apparent change to the poem is the inclusion of the vocalizations “he hi hi hi” and “ho ho ho ho,” which were not included in either the Densmore translation, Rothenberg's version or the 1965 version of *Summer.* The vocalizations do appear, however, in Densmore's original Ojibwemowin transcription, where she notes the song contains “An unusual number of vowel syllables,”[64] used simply, “to fill out the measures of the song,” and that “the syllables *ho ho ho ho, . . .* indicate the conclusion of a song.”[65]

63 Vizenor. *anishinabe nagamon.* p. 72.

64 Densmore. *Chippewa Music I.*, 81.

65 Ibid. p. 106.

Vizenor's reinsertion of the "obscure" vocables into the poem is explained by the Beaulieu texts, which show that the vocables, although non-semantic, do have a distinct religious and social meaning, as illustrated in Beaulieu's account of the resurrection of a young child by a midewiwin healer that Vizenor reprints in *anishinabe adisokan*:

> Upon entering the lodge he ran around to the left side of the lodge exclaiming *whe, whe, whe, whe,* at every step. In his hands he held a *mashkiki* pouch and when he had made a complete circle of the lodge he stopped and making a motion towards the body of dead child with the *mashkiki* pouch which he held in his hands, he exclaimed, *whay, ho, ho, ho.* The body of the child quivered and after this had been repeated the fourth time the dead child came to life.[66]

The importance to midewiwin tradition of the otherwise 'obscure' vocables "he, hi, hi, hi," and "ho, ho, ho, ho" is shown in Beaulieu's account. As Kimberly Blaeser notes, such untranslatable vocables play an important role in tribal literature, as they tie written expression back to the affective power of the oral tradition. As Blaeser argues, because "the remembered sounds themselves have power," they function "to place [Vizenor's] own writing in the oral tradition of the midewiwin songs," symbolically imbuing Vizenor's poems with the same affective properties of healing and reintegration.[67] By juxtaposing the Beaulieu text with the reexpressed dream song situates Vizenor's reexpressions in their cultural context.

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66 Vizenor, Gerald. *anishinabe adisokan.* Nodin Press. 1970. p. 74.

67 Blaeser. *Writing in the Oral Tradition*. p. 23.

Clearing Skies

The formal changes Vizenor makes to the nagamon act to acknowledge the history that separates Vizenor from the original enunciation of the songs, but also creates a sense of continuity between the two. The effort, however, is not a return. Vizenor is not attempting to revivify the poem's original meaning. Vizenor's poems, in a sense, attempt to make the traditional more modern, to make the Densmore texts relevant to his experiences as a modern Ojibwe—one who also happens to speak English and has an appreciation for Japanese poetic forms. In short, Vizenor's reexpressions do no unlock the meaning of the nagamon, rather they *impart* a meaning upon them.

With each revision of the song-poems, Vizenor adds another version of the text that is just as real (in terms of Ojibwe creative expression) or just as fake (in terms of absolute authenticity) as any other. What is of primary importance to Vizenor is that no single version of a song or poem be understood as definitive. The poems, like the Ojibwe themselves, been transform over time—responding and adapting to new modes of address—almost to the point of unrecognizability. Yet, for all that, they remain, somehow Ojibwe, reflecting something of their experience as a modern people, irreversibly marked by the colonial dispossession of the settler-state, the cultural pressures brought about by exposure to global capitalism, and the simple passage of time itself. [68] In a sense,

68 It may be helpful at this point to return to Vizenor's complicated, but vitally important concept of Native 'transmotion,' and its relation to his poetics. Loosely defined, 'transmotion' is the ability of indigenous communities to move freely, not only in space, but also time: to transform and adapt to new realities in ways informed by tradition, but not defined by it. For Vizenor, the political rights of Indigenous communities are inseparable from their ability to change, saying that "Transmotion, that sense of Native motion and an active presence, is *sui generis* sovereignty." In essence, indigenous sovereignty does not exist in spite of cultural change, but because of it. The indigenous community can change radically over time, like the Ship of Thesues, becoming almost completely different from how it once was. Yet, it is

Vizenor's poetics do not try to hide the scars of the Ojibwe, but make them public—offering a defiant assertion of survival in the face of adversity.

Nowhere is this process more apparent than in Vizenor's 1993 rendition of the Mide initiation song (Fig. 6). In this version Vizenor presents the text of the nagamon with a entirely unrelated pictograph: that of an animikii, or thunderbird. This particular juxtaposition of song and poem generates multiple possible interpretations. To the cultural outsider, the presence of the upward flying bird may seem like the ascending words of the Mide healer, sent up to clear the sky—a completely legitimate reading. To the cultural insider, however, the presence of the animikii is particularly relevant, as it profoundly changes the mood and tone of the poem. In the Ojibwe oral tradition the animikiig brought lightning, floods, and tornadoes that threatened utter devastation. At the same time, the Amikiig were also seen as agents of renewal, who rejuvenated the earth by bringing the rain. The juxtaposition of image and poem in this instance creates a narrative of destruction and the promise of renewal—an ominous thunderbank hovering over the eventual promise of clear skies.

Such a narrative is nowhere to be found in Densmore's original text, yet it has a profound relevancy to contemporary Ojibwe people—those who Vizenor calls the '*oshkianishinaabeg'* or 'new people.' Faced with a long history of dispossession, it can be easy to think that contemporary Ojibwe have lost their way. Dominant narratives about the loss of land, of culture, of historical knowledge permeate our understanding about the lives of indigenous peoples, telling us that modern Ojibwe are but shadows of who they once were. The flood of colonization, they would have us believe, has washed

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precisely the ability of the indigenous community to see itself as self-consistent with its previous incarnations that generates a claim to sovereignty.

what is this i promise you

he hi hi hi

the sky

will be bright and clear

for you

this is what i promise you

ho ho ho ho

Fig. 6 - Vizenor's reexpression of the Mide Initiation Song from *Summer in the Spring* (1993)

away almost everything. The policy of termination relied on the acceptance of such narratives in order to strip indigenous peoples of rights they had held for centuries. Vizenor's poem, however, acts as a reminder that even in the heaviest of rains, one has the power to imagine a better future with clear skies above. Vizenor's poem promises that so long as the Ojibwe are capable of reimagining and reasserting who they are as a people—a continually new people—they will continue to weather the storm.

4 - The government is not so much our problem

> *America has been brainwashed to define government programs as paternalistic per se . . . The BIA is therefore tagged as paternalistic because people feel that its services are holding Indians back. Few have ever defined "back" for me. I would define it, as did Congress in 1819, back from extinction.*
>
> -Vine Deloria

> *Pork. With Natural Juices. Ready to Eat. Distributed by USDA in cooperation with State and local governments for Food Help Programs. NOT TO BE SOLD OR EXCHANGED.*
>
> -Can of Commodity Pork

One of the most widely quoted passages from the Ojibwe novelist Louise Erdrich comes near the end of *Tracks* (1988). Having lost his adopted daughter, Lulu, to a government boarding school, Nanapush laments the changes brought to his Ojibwe community in the first years of the 20th century:

> [O]nce the bureaucrats sink their barbed pens into the lives of Indians, the paper starts flying, a blizzard of legal forms, a waste of ink by the gallon, a correspondence to which there is no end or reason. That's when I began to see what we were becoming, and the years have borne me out: a tribe of filing cabinets and triplicates, a tribe of single-space documents, directives, policy. A tribe of pressed trees. A tribe of chicken-scratch that can be scattered by a

wind, diminished to ashes by one struck match.[1]

Critics seem to be drawn to this passage because it so clearly and evocatively describes, as Chadwick Allen puts it, "the subjugation of the Chippewa and the appropriation of their lands as the inevitable outcome of federal 'supervision and support.'"[2] For these critics, Nanapush's lament acts as a "clear indictment of the United States"[3] revealing "the white man's written promises are unstable texts."[4] As many have noted, the affective power of the passage comes from the symbolic linkage of the ecologically catastrophic effects of the deforestation of Ojibwe land to the culturally catastrophic effects of state programs (like Lulu's boarding school) that forced Ojibwe into assimilating to Euromerican norms.

Given this unequivocal condemnation of the state's interference in the lives of the Ojibwe, it is not surprising that very few critics go on to quote the rest of the passage:

> For I did stand for tribal chairman, as you know, defeating Pukwan in that last year. To become a bureaucrat myself was the only way that I could wade through

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1 Erdrich, Louise. *Tracks*. New York: Henry Holt and Company. 1988. p. 225.

2 Allen, Chadwick. "Postcolonial theory and the discourse of treaties." *American Quarterly* 52, no. 1. 2000: 59-89. p. 77.

3 Cornell, Daniel. "Woman Looking: Revis(ion)ing Pauline's Position in Louise Erdrich's *Tracks." Studies in American Indian Literature.* Vol. 4, no. 1. Spring 1990. p. 62.

4 Peterson, Nancy J. *Against Amnesia: Contemporary Women Writers and the Crises of Historical Memory*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001. p. 31.

> the letters, the reports, the only place where I could find a ledge to kneel on, to reach through the loophole and draw [Lulu] home.[5]

The decision Nanapush makes to embrace institutional authority is hard to justify in a critical climate that presents any intrusion of the state into the lives of Indians as damaging—not only to their political claims of sovereignty, but to their cultural or spiritual identity. After decades of embracing a critique of state-funded programs as disciplinary institutions meant to break down tribal identity, literary critics may have trouble seeing Nanapush's decision as anything but the product of internalized settler-colonialism instead of what they appear to be: a defiant reclamation of agency.

Nanapush's decision to run for tribal chairman is hardly the only example in Erdrich's fiction of an Ojibwe character finding agency in the blizzard of government documents. Fleur Pillager, who initially claims in *Tracks* that the government papers "had no bearing or sense,"[6] spends her final years in a home "stacked to the low ceilings with papers, with folders, with bundled envelopes and boxes of rippled cardboard that seem to hold still more files and newspapers and clippings."[7] Finding belonging in the 'tribe of pressed trees' even prevents Nanapush's great-grandson Lyman Lamartine from committing suicide in *Love Medicine:*

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5 Erdrich. *Tracks.* p. 225.

6 Erdrich. *Tracks.* p. 174.

7 Erdrich, Louise. *The Bingo Palace.* HarperCollins. 1994. p. 134.

> I could die now and leave no ripple. Why not! I considered, but then I came up with the fact that my death would leave a gap in the BIA records, my IRS account would be labeled incomplete until it closed. There would be minor confusion. These thoughts gave me a warm jolt. In cabinets of files, anyway, I still maintained existence. The government knew me though the wind and earth did not. I was alive, at least on paper. I was someone.[8]

Perhaps the most explicit example is one character's assertion in *The Last Report from Little No Horse* that "The government is not so much our problem"[9] (74).

All of these examples hint at a broader theme that I believe runs throughout Louise Erdrich's entire Matchi Manitou cycle: the need for the Ojibwe to accept and even embrace bureaucratic state institutions as a means of pragmatic survival. Almost all of Erdrich's Matchi Manitou books feature at least one character (usually the protagonist) who moves from directionless individualism to a profound sense of communal identity through by accepting—or being forced into—a position of institutional authority, in which they are learn how to aid and support their Ojibwe community. We see this narrative in Nanapush's rise to tribal chairman in *Tracks* and *Four Souls*, Lipsha's awakening to tribal political consciousness in *The Bingo Palace,* Agnes Dewitt/Father Damien's tireless advocacy as the accidental priest of the eponymous Little No Horse congregation, Faye Traver's decision to reestablish ties with her reservation community by repatriating a sacred object in *The Painted Drum*, Judge Antone Bazil Coutts' judicial

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8 Erdrich, Louise. *Love Medicine* (rev. ed). HarperCollins. 2005. pp. 300-1.

9 Erdrich, Louise. *Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse.* HarperCollins. 2009. p. 74.

activism in *The Plague of Doves*, even Lyman Lamartine's ambivalent efforts to promote economic development on the reservation in *Love Medicine.*[10] While one may credit the similarity of these stories to the plot of communal reintegration inherent in the comic mode, the fact that almost all of these characters find reintegration through the acceptance of institutional responsibility to that community marks a very real (and heretofore unexamined) aspect of Louise Erdrich's novelistic oeuvre.

Erdrich's interest in the state hardly comes as a surprise, given her background. Erdrich and her siblings were part of a small but influential generation of Native Americans raised in a middle-class milieu by employees of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Erdrich was born in 1953 to Rita and Ralph Erdrich, both teachers at the Whapeton Indian School, an off-reservation boarding school in North Dakota. Erdrich's maternal grandfather, Patrick Gourneau, served as the tribal chairman of the Turtle Mountain reservation during the tumultuous period between 1953 and 1959—becoming one of the most vocal opponents of termination policy and its threat to reservation welfare services. The oldest of seven, Erdrich attended Dartmouth in order to pursue a career as a professional writer, while the majority of her siblings followed in the footsteps of her parents and joined the public sector. In an interview, Erdrich credited her siblings'

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10 As Bruce Robbins theorizes in *Upward Mobility and the Common Good: Toward a Literary History of the Welfare State*, the way we understand and imagine the working of the welfare state in literature is primarily through narratives of upward mobility. As a character rises in social standing in a novel, the reader sees how his/her rise is achieved only through the intervention and assistance of others—benefactors, patrons, wardens, etc. In short, stories such as these create in the reader a sense that innate ability and self-sufficiency—heroic virtues in the ur-narrative of capitalism—are secondary to the democratic desire of others to aid one another in achieving relatively more comfortable lives. The democratization of social responsibility that these narratives present reinforces and recapitulates the ideological assumptions that drive the welfare state, namely, that society as a whole bears some responsibility to improve the lives of the poor, sick, old or disabled.

experiences working on behalf of federal programs and tribal governments as an influence on her own work, stating:

> I have six brothers and sisters, and nearly all of them work with Ojibwe or Dakota or other Native people. My youngest brother, youngest sister, and brother-in-law have worked with the Indian Health Service for a total of more than forty years. My second-oldest brother works in northern Minnesota sorting out the environmental issues for all of the Ojibwe Nations throughout the entire Midwest. Their experiences make magical realism seem ho-hum.[11]

Evidence of her family members' experiences working in various state positions proliferates throughout Erdrich's fiction, from Klaus Shawano's waste management firm in *The Antelope Wife* (1998) to Nanapush's effort as tribal chairman to resist the termination of his tribe in *Four Souls* (2004). For Erdrich, these experiences reflect the contemporary reality of Ojibwe life, as one of her narrators explains, "We are a tribe of office workers, bank tellers, book readers, and bureaucrats."[12]

By the time Erdrich began her career with the publication of *Love Medicine* in 1984, Theo Beaulieu's vision for self-governing, semi-autonomous homelands for the Ojibwe had started to become a reality. In the face of widespread protest against termination policy from tribal leaders and Native activist groups, the policy of termination was abandoned by the late sixties. In 1972 the U.S. federal government took

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11 Halliday, Lisa. "Louise Erdrch, The Art of Fiction No. 208." *The Paris Review*. No 195, (Winter 2010). p. 132.

12 Erdrich, Louise. *The Plague of Doves*. HarperCollins. 2008. p. 9.

a new stance toward Native peoples, announcing that it would politically and financially support Indian tribes' self-government and economic development. Four years later, an Ojibwe couple from Leech Lake would win a landmark case before the Supreme Court that would have a transformative effect on tribal nations. The results of *Bryan v. Itasca County* denied the right of states to enforce state laws on tribal lands, opening up new horizons for tribal economic development, most recognizably in the form of casinos and the sale of goods tax-free.[13] Empowered by the shift in federal attitudes toward self-government and funded by new sources of revenue, Indian nations throughout the U.S. went through an amazing transformation in the last three decades of the 20th century—including the Ojibwe. For the first time, Indian nations began to look appreciably more like states: generating revenue independent of the federal government; offering services directly to their citizens; and establishing community centers, colleges, and clinics.

In this chapter, I will shift my examination away from the ways in which Ojibwe nationhood is presented in different kinds of literary forms, to the ways in which literature helps to define new forms of Ojibwe nationhood—particularly that of the nation-state. Taken as a whole, Erdrich's Match Manitou series narrates the story of one Ojibwe community's transformation from a carceral institution to economically stable nation-state. This change is effected not through rejection of state-forms of power (including federal power), but through the ability of Indians—like Nanapush—to gain access to the management of the state institutions in order to limit their potential for abuse. While many such programs have been criticized as efforts to break the ties of

13 For a history of *Bryan v. Itasca*, see Treuer, David. *Rez Life.* Atlantic Monthly Press. 2012. pp. 228-241.

communal reciprocity, in Erdrich's novels those who attain such positions of institutional authority are almost always guided by values that are often called traditional: religious belief, redistribution, and environmentalism. In Erdrich's novels, state welfare programs not only provide a means of pragmatic survival for the Ojibwe, but as a chance to reclaim their own agency in the aftermath of colonialism. Simply put, in Erdrich's fiction the welfare institutions that were meant to quietly assimilate the Ojibwe into Euroamerican life actually create the conditions for the Ojibwe to become more politically coherent as a nation-state.

In this chapter, I will argue that Native American literary criticism has yet to articulate an understanding of the ambiguously positive role state institutions (both federal and tribal) play in Native life. By characterizing indigenous nationalism as the effort to achieve absolute sovereignty, such criticism risks ignoring the everyday politics of actually-existing indigenous nations, who actively pursue U.S. state resources. I will offer a corrective to this critical oversight, by examining two of Louise Erdrich's recent novels, *The Plague of Doves* (2008) and *The Painted Drum* (2005). Both texts, I argue, offer a positive commentary on the Ojibwe's relationship to state-forms of government—both that of the U.S. state as well as the reservation as Ojibwe nation-state. *The Plague of Doves*, I argue, employs a plot of erotic patronage between an Indian and a non-Native as an allegory for the Ojibwe's historically ambiguous relationship to the U.S. state, ultimately articulating the need for tribal self-governance as a necessary response to white supremacy. *The Painted Drum* shows how state institutions—often the site of abuse—can be made to reflect indigenous values. I will argue that these novels are articulations of a form of Ojibwe nationalism based on interdependency rather than

separatism—a form that encourages relationships of mutual obligation across national borders.

Where the novel had previous offered a useful form for Theo Beaulieu and Janet Lewis's efforts to narrate the modernity of the Ojibwe people, the novel and its relation to Ojibwe oral tradition takes on a different kind of valence for Erdrich. Of the authors examined in this dissertation, Erdrich most wholly embraces the novel-form. Unlike Beaulieu, Lewis, and Vizenor, Erdrich does not attempt to make a western literary form conform to the formal expectations of Ojibwe oral genres, but this is because the Ojibwe oral tradition is not her primary source of inspiration. Unlike her predecessors, Erdrich is under littler pressure to argue for the modernity of the Ojibwe—it is seemingly manifest in the modern Ojibwe nation-state. Developed simultaneously with the nation-state form, the novel is the logical form for representing contemporary Ojibwe life in a way that other forms (even more traditional oral forms) seem less equipped to do. The task of Erdrich's fiction, then, is to adapt traditional material to better suit the form of the novel, rather than the other way around.

Erdrich's novels, I argue, work to find ways to express what might be called traditional Ojibwe philosophical beliefs—particularly the critically important idea of mino-bimaadiziwin—in the non-indigenous form of the novel. The aesthetic effort Erdrich's fiction makes to express Ojibwe philosophical thought with western literary form mirrors the simultaneous political work of reconciling traditional indigenous values with the state form of government. Read in this way, Erdrich's fiction presents a series of provocative challenges to the reader, asking if the novel and the state—both imposed forms—can be made to express indigenous values.

The Sword of Sovereignty

Critical consensus has it that Erdrich's fiction has little or no interest in the promotion of indigenous nationalism—a reputation due, at least in part, to these uncritical representations of federal bureaucracy's expansive role in Ojibwe life. As early as 1988, Erdrich's fiction came under fire for its apparent lack of dedication to anti-colonial resistance. The most notable criticism came from fellow Native novelist Leslie Marmon Silko, who accused Erdrich of being a "self-referential" writer who pandered to a non-Native readership. Silko argued that Erdrich's prose has "an ethereal clarity and shimmering beauty because no history or politics intrudes to muddy the well of pure necessity contained within language itself."[14] This line of criticism was repeated—more forcefully—by the public intellectual Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, who argued that Erdrich not only fails to coherently criticize the colonial domination of Indians, she was also indirectly complicit in it, because her fiction reflected the "tastes and interests of the dominant culture" instead of participating in the "defense of a coherent national mythos."[15] Even more sympathetic readers of Erdrich locate the politics of her fiction somewhere in the continuum of a cosmopolitanism, as seen in Alan Velie's assessment

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14 Silko, Leslie Marmon. "Here's an Odd Artifact for the Fairy-Tale Shelf." Reprinted in *Studies in American Indian Literatures.* Vol. 10, no. 4. Fall 1986. pp. 177-184.

15 Cook-Lynn, Elizabeth. *Anti-Indianism in Modern America: A Voice from Tatekeya's Earth.* University of Illinois Press. 2001. p. 35. Interestingly, Cook-Lynn's apparent animus against Erdrich may have something to do with Erdrich's (misguided) agreement with her late husband Michael Dorris's suggestion that pregnant Indian women suffering from alcoholism be imprisoned to reduce the chances that their children be born with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. Cook-Lynn rightfully criticizes Dorris for the misogynistic underpinnings of this argument, which couched the incarceration in terms of legal punishment for moral wrongdoing on the part of women suffering from a debilitating disease. Dorris, as Cook-Lynn also rightly points out, does not take into account the economic, cultural and historical factors involved in alcoholism.

that critics should "honor [Erdrich's] wish" to be seen as "an American writer" who "usually (though not always) writes about members of her tribe, the Chippewa."[16] Summing up two decades of critical reception to Erdrich's work, Arnold Krupat and Michael Elliot argue that Erdrich's novels present an "understanding of community that sometimes resembles nationalism" but is not nationalist itself, because it lacks "the political force of an exclusive national sovereignty."[17]

What interests me about these assessments of Erdrich's work is has to do with a fundamental assumption made visible in Krupat and Elliot's formulation of *exclusive* national sovereignty as the primary goal of Native American nationalism. Krupat and Elliot make it clear that, for them and many others, the only logical telos of Native nationalism is separatism: "To undo [the] paradoxical or oxymoronic status as 'dependent sovereigns'—to resist colonial limitations on their *sovereign* rights—is the foremost concern of Native nations today."[18] I specifically choose this formulation because it comes from a critic (Arnold Krupat) whose attitude toward the project of Native separatism is ambivalent at best, showing how deeply rooted this assumption is in the criticism of Erdrich that it can bring two critics as ideologically divergent as Krupat (a cosmopolitanist) and Cook-Lynn (a separatist) together in tacit agreement about the nature of Native nationalism. For Erdrich's writing to support the project Ojibwe nationhood, these critics agree, it must articulate an unequivocal claim to absolute Ojibwe

16 Velie, Alan. "Louise Erdrich and American Indian Literary Nationalism." *Studies in the Literary Achievement of Louise Erdrich Native American Writer: Fifteen Critical Essays*. Ed. Brajesh Sawhney. Edwin Mellen Press. 2008. p. 45.

17 Elliot, Michael A. and Krupat, Arnold. "American Indian Fiction and Anticolonial Resistance." *The Columbia Guide to American Indian Literatures of the United States Since 1945*. ed. Eric Cheyfitz. p. 149.

18 Ibid. p. 127.

sovereignty. Anything less becomes a promotion of integrationist multiculturalism at best, and an apology for colonization at worst.

In such an interpretative framework, the effect of characters such as Nanapush trying to control the state's influence on Ojibwe life through greater *involvement in it* instead of *resistance to it* works against the best interests of his own nation. Such a reading forces the reader to engage with Erdrich's work as the tragic history of the slow diminishment and disappearance of Ojibwe identity, of the kind prophesized by Nanapush at the end of *Tracks*. Yet any such tragic reading of the Matchi Manitou novels is foreclosed by narratives of the novels themselves, which are (with the possible exception of *Tracks*) unerringly comic—and not just thematically. Each one of these novels ends with a strong reassertion of community into which previously alienated characters are reintegrated—the structural definition of the comic mode.[19] Indeed, one could easily read the continued coherence of Ojibwe identity and community in Erdrich's fiction as a kind of nationalism, but one different than that articulated by Krupat, Cook-Lynn, et. al. Erdrich's nationalism, which I will (following Scott Richard Lyons) call 'realist nationalism,' is one in which she seeks to represent the everyday desires and needs of an Ojibwe community, then shows how those needs can be met by an organized Ojibwe nation.

Yet, to advocate for this looser, less separatist kind of nationalism means asking a fundamental yet difficult question: what do Native nations want? The answer does not seem to be resisting all limitations to their sovereignty. No tribe in the modern era has

19 See Northrup Frye, *Anatomy.*

seriously attempted to break its treaty obligations and secede from the U.S., even though, at a theoretical level, such an action is entirely in the realm of the possible.[20] While many tribes advocate for their ability to manage their own political and economic affairs without coercive interference, these claims should not be read as a call for *no* federal involvement in Indian affairs. Indeed, most tribes in the U.S. devote large amounts of time and resources to engaging with government institutions in order to bring more federal services and money into their communities. Any claim that the lack of radical articulations of sovereignty on the part of these tribal governments can chalked up to hegemonic coercion or internalized colonialism creates an absurd paradox by which those who govern tribal nations today cannot be true nationalists. One is left with the conclusion that maintaining a dialogic political relationship with the U.S. (call it domestic dependent sovereignty if you must) remains politically advantageous, if only ambivalently so, for Native peoples.

So, if not absolute sovereignty, then what do Indian nations want? As the pioneering scholar of federal Indian law Rennard Strickland (Osage/Cherokee) suggests, increasing tribal sovereignty is but a means to larger social goals:

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20 Such a movement has been advocated by the late AIM activist Russell Means, who briefly gained attention in 2007 by announcing the establishment of a sovereign nation named the Republic of Lakotah in a territory encompassing much of modern North and South Dakota, Nebraska, and Wyoming. Means' vision for Lakotah was as a state that was guided by the principle of "individual liberty through community rule." Many of the proposed aspects of Lakotah, such as a lack of direct government taxation and an economy operated on the gold standard, were aligned with contemporary Libertarian politics. As such, Means' proposed nation gained positive attention and support from prominent Libertarian media outlets and right-wing secessionist movements across the country. While the initial announcement captured the public's imagination, once it was determined that Means was not a representative of any Lakota, Dakota, or Nakota government—and therefore had no power to abrogate any treaties made with these tribes—the media attention soon faded.

> *Sovereignty!* The word slides melodically from our lips, but sovereignty alone doesn't put food on tables, clothes on backs, or heat in houses. Sovereignty is not a state of salvation that magically erases all troubles. It can be a siren's song drawing us away from the real needs of real people. Our challenge—the challenge of Indian law—is to forge the sword of sovereignty into a weapon capable of attacking the basic human problems of Indian people.[21]

Native nations, Strickland suggest, exist primarily to benefit and protect their people's welfare. While it needs little rehearsing here, many Indians today still face enormous social, economic and health problems in the aftermath of Euroamerican colonization—and continuing racism. In the face Indian Country's very real social problems, the top priority of most tribal nations in their day-to-day function is to offer the kinds of services that ensure that their people are fed, clothed, housed, educated, healed and protected. More often than not, attaining the resources necessary to address these needs effectively has meant that tribal nations have had to form closer ties to the federal government—not distance themselves from it. This is not to say that the project of increasing a tribal nation's control over these institutions and resources is misguided. As Strickland suggests, increased self-determination can be the most effective way for tribes to combat poverty, substance abuse, and other social concerns. However, looking at the actions of tribal nations as they exist today makes one idea very clear: Indians want the benefits of the welfare state.

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21 Strickland, Rennard. *Tonto's Revenge: Reflections on American Indian Culture and Policy.* University of New Mexico Press. 1997. p. 52.

But why talk about literature and the welfare state? Literary scholar Amanda Claybough, claims that the state more generally, and the welfare state specifically, suffers from a lack of visibility. "[W]e are repeatedly told by the enemies of government that government is bad," Claybaugh argues, "and we have trouble seeing that government is, in fact, good, because we have trouble seeing it at all." She continues:

> This is because the benefits that government provides become invisible as we become accustomed to them (we take the bridge for granted after it has been built); the benefits of government are often separated from its costs (we do not associate our visit to the park with the taxes we have paid); and the most significant benefits are often events that do not take place (the inspected building that does not collapse, the evacuation effected in time).[22]

Literature and other forms of narrative, so the argument goes, can play an important role in making these otherwise ignored benefits of government visible to readers by both dramatizing and humanizing their affects on the every day lives of characters. One is only willing to defend what one can see, and the welfare state—so Claybaugh argues—is in vital need of defense. The welfare state is an imperfect and oftentimes deeply flawed project (especially in the U.S.), but it is the only defense against the disastrous economic, social and ecological effects of capitalism available to those most vulnerable to it. In a historical moment when the forces of corporate capitalism and fiscal conservatism are

22 Claybaugh, Amanda. "Government is Good." *The Minnesota Review*. No. 70. Spring/Summer 2008. p. 70.

taking advantage of global economic instability to advocate for the dismantling of the welfare state—rendered as wasteful 'entitlement' programs for the lazy and greedy—literature's counteractive work to represent the state's influence as fundamentally positive is vitally important.

It is important to note, however, that the government decidedly does not suffer from a lack of visibility to American Indians. The daily lives of Indians are shot through with interactions with the government in ways that are almost unimaginable to non-Natives. Indeed, Indians may be the most highly serviced population in the U.S. and show it through a familiarity with a specialized vocabulary of government service: HUD houses, IHS hospitals, commods, the BIA, CDIBs—terms virtually unrecognizable to most Americans. One could even make the case that American Indians were the first recipients of large-scale federal welfare in the U.S. when, during the 18th and 19th centuries, treaty obligations made a relatively weak and small federal government solely responsible for the food, education, housing and health of Indians.

In contradistinction to the observation of Claybaugh, the state does not suffer from a crisis of visibility in Indian Country—it suffers from a crisis of reputation. In the last five decades, whenever Indians erupted into wider public consciousness, it was almost always due to the protest of some fresh abuse at the hands of the state. Alcatraz, Wounded Knee II, the takeover of the BIA, the Oka crisis in Canada, all brought images of Indians, intensely angry at the state and its institutions, into the living rooms of people around the world. Indeed, it is difficult to deny the legitimacy of their anger. The legacy of state's involvement in the lives of Indians, especially in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, is an all-too-familiar litany of horrors: inadequate reservations, boarding

schools, forced assimilation programs, full scale war—a list of grievances known even to those with little other knowledge of Indians. If no other population in the U.S. is as exposed to the state as American Indians, no other population has suffered more for it.

However, many of the failures and abuses visited upon Natives by the state, I contend, were never the result of the fact that all state institutions are intrinsically abusive and assimilative (at this point such readings of Foucault may no longer be possible), but because the actions of that state were, and often continue to be, guided by fundamentally racist attitudes regarding Indians. This explanation is not meant to excuse any of the (many) abuses carried out against Natives through the channels of state institutions and under the auspices of 'improving' tribal welfare. Nor am I claiming that the kind of racism that drove these abuses has been completely, or even mostly, evacuated from the contemporary political treatment of tribes in the U.S. What I am saying is that such racist abuses have an intellectual history—a genealogy ripe for critique—yet one that suggests that anti-Indian racism is neither a transhistorical phenomenon nor is it inherent in the structure of the welfare state. Recognizing the fundamental instability of racism allows us to see what tribal governments and Indian advocates all over the country already know: the welfare tribes receive from the U.S. is imperfect, but it can be improved through negotiation, critique and even, sometimes, resistance.

Yet, this dialogical process of negotiation is faces a fundamental obstacle: the perception—on the part of many Natives and whites—that any federal involvement in the lives of Indians is, by its very nature, oppressive. As Vine Deloria observed, it is the very history of the state's racism that has shaped the public perception of federal Indian policy:

> People have found it hard to think of Indians without conjuring up the picture of a massive bureaucracy oppressing a helpless people. Right-wing news commentators delight in picturing the Indian as a captive of the evil forces of socialism and leftist policy. Liberals view the bureaucracy as an evil denial of the inherent rights of a free man.[23]

As Deloria explains, the problem with both of these views is that they fail to acknowledge the unique legal status of the "early treaties and statutes by which Indians bargained and received these rights to services" from the federal government "in return for enormous land cessions."[24] Instead, both the left and the right have a tendency to see the services provided by the federal government to Indians as reparative or rehabilitative, positions which limit federal responsibility to a predefined end. These models suggest that there can be a monetary value at which point whatever debts owed to Indians by the U.S. can be repaid, eventually absolving the Federal government's trust relationship with Indian tribes. While this view is consistent with the capitalist conception of land as alienable and money as proper compensation for mistreatment, it is inconsistent with the usufructuary paradigm historically assumed by many Indian tribes (including the Ojibwe) as the basis for treaties with the U.S. Since the U.S. has no current plans to stop their use

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23 Deloria Jr., Vine. *Custer Died For Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto.* University of Oklahoma Press. 1969. p. 125. Even though Deloria made this observation in 1968, I believe very little about the situation has changed.

24 Ibid.

of Indian lands, the federal government bears a responsibility to provide services to Indians as long as the grass grows and the rivers flow.

Understanding American Indian politics as the ongoing to get the state to recognize its continued obligations to Indians causes us to reformulate Claybaugh's initial argument about the role literature can play in shaping state policy through its appeal to public sentiment. One may argue that the work that Native American literature does is to make Indians more visible to the state—by which I mean making the specific material and cultural desires of Indian communities apprehendable to those who direct the resources of the state, while at the same time rehabilitating the image of the state's influence in Native life to show that it can actually address those need without oppressing Native people.

It is precisely this sort of project that I see in the Matchi Manitou novels of Louise Erdrich. Taken as a whole, the entire Matchi Manitou series narrates a story of one Ojibwe community's attempt to dialogically engage with the U.S. state in order to transform their reservation from a carceral institution to economically stable nation. This change is effected not through rejection of federal influence, but through the ability of upwardly mobile Indians—and their allies—to gain access to the management of the state institutions in order to limit their potential for racist abuse. The characters who most effectively work toward this change are those who have embraced a degree of upward mobility, most often presented as an assent to federal programs that are meant to make Indians more economically self sufficient. While many such programs have been criticized as efforts to break the ties of communal reciprocity, in Erdrich's novels the

wealth and privilege gained by upwardly mobile Indians tends to find its way back to the tribal community, either materially or in terms of expanded political power.

Holding a wolf by the ear

The most striking example of this process is presented in the character of Judge Antone Bazil Coutts in *The Plague of Doves.* Coutts' story is one of upward mobility but also of his movement from the margins of Ojibwe society to a position at its center. Erdrich tells the story of Coutts' upward mobility as a narrative of "erotic patronage," in which a younger, socially-disadvantaged man is mentored into upward mobility by an older woman of high(er) social standing who takes him on as her lover. The narrative of erotic patronage is a literary trope with a long history, as well as one with generally-accepted implications in regards to representations of the state. According to Robbins, the representation of such an affair becomes a symbolic site where the cultural work of representing the relationship between welfare state and its subjects takes place. Reading the 'older woman' novels of Balzac and Stendhal, Robbins concludes that representations of such relationships effectively model the same kind of benign desire to see the disadvantaged come to a position of self-sufficiency at the heart of the political project of the welfare state.[25] The subject of Coutts' narrative is of his decades-long affair with Dr. Cordelia Lochren. A local surgeon, Cordelia is much older than Coutts, non-Native, and—most importantly—the only survivor of the massacre which set the plot of the novel in motion.

25 Robbins, Bruce. *Upward Mobility and the Common Good: Toward a Literary History of the Welfare State.* Princeton University Press. 2007. pp. 22-54.

On first glance, the relationship between Coutts and Cordelia reflects this trope of erotic patronage well—at least in its structural aspects. At the beginning of their relationship Cordelia has a successful practice as one of the only surgeons in the small town of Pluto, while Coutts is directionless teenager from a once-important, but now poor, family of mixed-blood lawyers. Coutts draws attention to their disparity, by describing Cordelia as "slightly bigger" than himself. Coutts recalls how Cordelia fed him sandwiches, milk and honey in order to sustain his energy during marathon sessions of love making, evocatively noting, "She was a great believer in the restorative powers of milk and honey" (274).[26] The effect of these descriptions is to place Cordelia in the position of both lover and caretaker to Coutts, reminding the reader of her position of higher social standing and her ability to patronize him. As one would expect from generic convention, this difference in social status becomes a goad to Coutts' desire for upward mobility, or as he puts it, "getting [him]self ahead" (280). In order to be nearer to Cordelia, Coutts takes his first job at the cemetery that abuts her property. As she begins to show interest in a wealthier suitor her own age, Coutts is driven to earn his law degree and pass the bar exam to prove his ability to prove his worth—leading, ultimately, to his rise in the world.

In historical tradition of the novel of erotic patronage—and most other novels of patron-facilitated upward mobility—the social difference between the senior and junior partners is produced solely by class. The upwardly mobile subject is poor, the benignant patron is rich (or if not materially wealthy, has greater social capital). In accepted generic convention, the erotic patronage between the older benefactor and the younger

26 Erdrich. *Doves.* p.274. All proceeding citations given as parentheticals.

beneficiary comes to an end when the class differences between them are overcome and the newly-found social success of the younger partner instills in him the desire to start a family, which requires leaving the older woman for whom reproduction has become biologically impossible. Robbins reads this biological imperative as symbolic of the imperative of the newly enfranchised social citizen to reproduce of the society in which he is now invested.

However, in Erdrich's version of the erotic patronage narrative, class is not the only social determinate that separates the older woman from her younger counterpart. Instead, Coutts' and Cordelia's relationship is brought to a definitive end when Cordelia allows her new husband to tear down Coutts' home, despite Coutts' impassioned public plea for her to stop the demolition for the sake of their love. Confused by the sheer cruelty of the act, Coutts definitively ends their relationship. As Coutts later learns, Cordelia's willingness to inflict harm on him rather than publicly acknowledge their relationship is but one aspect of a deep-seated anti-Indian racism Cordelia has harbored for decades. Coutts is confronted with the depth of Cordelia's racism when he discovers that throughout her entire career as a border-town doctor, she always refused to treat Indians—even in emergencies. In light of this revelation, Coutts is forced to reassess his entire secret decades-long affair:

> I understood, then, that I'd known everything and nothing about the doctor. Only later did I realize; if I had been the same age as C., it would not have mattered. Even though she had treated my head bumps. Become my lover, I'd always be her one exception. Or worse, her absolution. Every time I touched her, she was

> forgiven. I thought the whole thing out . . . I took in the history. I had to swallow it before I accepted why Cordelia loved me and why she could not abide that she loved me. (292)

By adding the factor of race to a narrative genre that historically has been concerned only with class, Erdrich uses Coutts' and Cordelia's relationship to illustrate the ways racism adds an unexpected complication to the upward mobility story. Just as Coutts' relationship with Cordelia cannot lead to marriage (symbolic of their social equality) due to her racism, so too is mere economic upward mobility incapable of producing true social equality between Indians and whites. No amount of economic success can fully insulate the Indian subject from racism (although it may mitigate its effects considerably), a situation that will always limit the effectiveness of upward mobility in producing effective social citizenship that allows Indians to see themselves as having social obligations to non-Natives.

At the same time, Coutts' narrative suggests that Euroamerican racism towards Indians has the unintended effect of redirecting upwardly mobile Indians' sense of social citizenship toward their own communities. By reducing him to a mere representative of a social group, the experience of racism forces Coutts to identify with members of own tribe in ways he may not have otherwise have. Cordelia's feelings for Coutts are not predicated solely on his qualities as an individual, but on his ability to represent a constellation of conflicting emotions she has toward all Indians. As such, Coutts is forced to reimagine his subjectivity in the context of their romantic relationship, as well as his place in society, as being defined by his Ojibwe identity. The social surplus of this

identity forces Coutts to recognize the degree to which his relationship with Cordelia came at the expense of his own people—he was the "exception" given special treatment denied to others. Seeing himself as unfairly privileged causes Coutts to assume a portion of responsibility for Cordelia's mistreatment of his people. The novel confirms as much when Coutts describes his ignorance of Cordelia's racism as evidence of his "off-reservation" mindset (291). He had no knowledge of the harm being caused by Cordelia's bitter feelings toward other Natives because he didn't imagine himself as being part of a larger Ojibwe community.

The structure of Coutts' narrative invites the reader to see how Euroamerican racism acts the centripetal force that draws upwardly mobile Indians back to their communities, and keeps them from being propelled into assimilation. Prior to the demolition of his home, Coutts saw himself entering private legal practice, hoping to make money once he'd "hung out [his] shingle" (286). Immediately after the demolition of his home and the end of his relationship with Cordelia, however, Coutts informs the reader that he decides to practice law on behalf of Indian tribes, saying: "I got some land back for one tribe, went to Washington, helped with a case regarding tribal religion, one thing and another, until I jumped at the chance to come back. Only not to Pluto, but to the reservation" (289). Erdrich invites us to read Coutts' political work defending the interests of Indians as a direct response to the racism that cost him his home—a reading made even more compelling by the fact that he works to restore Indian homelands. Just as Cordelia's love inspires Coutts to higher social status, Cordelia's racism transforms Coutts from a relatively apolitical, off-reservation Indian into an on-reservation advocate for Indian rights.

At the same time, it is important to examine the ways in which *Plague of Doves* presents racism as a particularly unstable social phenomenon, by presenting Cordelia's racism not as unrelenting programmatic hatred, but the product of historical misunderstanding, ignorance and fear. Explaining why she rejected Indian patients in the final pages of the novel, Cordelia claims not to be "a bigoted person," explaining that her decision to deny treatment to Indians "shamed her." Rather, she explains that she experiences a "specific paralysis" when seeing Indians, an "unsteady weakness in their presence" (298). We, as readers, have no reason to doubt the honesty of Cordelia's statement, given the confessional tone of the passage. Cordelia's feelings about Indians do not cohere into the solidity of genocidal disgust, but remain unstable and indeterminate. Cordelia's "paralysis" and "weakness" before Indians speaks to a kind of fear—a fear that the novel suggests comes from an historical misunderstanding. Until well into her adulthood, Cordelia was allowed to believe that her family was massacred by the Indians who were lynched for the crime, even though there was evidence enough to implicate a local white man (307). By the time she learns the truth, however, her mistrust and fear of Indian savagery has hardened into unconscious habit.

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If, as Robbins argues, we can read the same structure of feeling that informs the relationship between subject and the welfare state in narratives of erotic patronage, Erdrich's version of the plot may then be read for what it has to say about the relationship between the Ojibwe and the U.S. state. When we do so, an image begins to emerge of a

history in which the state's attitude toward the Indian subject, like Cordelia's attitude toward Coutts, is defined by a constant tension between two conflicting desires: a humanitarian desire to promote Indian welfare, and the racist desire to protect the idea of Euroamerican supremacy. This allows us to see how the racist drive to assimilate or destroy Indian difference is actually at odds with the welfare state's underlying philosophy of the diffusion of social responsibility because it denies upwardly mobile Indians access to true social equality.

This history is clearly seen in *The Plague of Doves* in the palimpsestic presence, throughout the novel, of Louis Riel. For Erdrich, the hanging of Louis Riel in 1885 marks the definitive end of a brief moment in history in which true political equality between Euroamericans and Natives was seen as a real possibility. While many remember Riel as separatist revolutionary, he is presented throughout the novel as a committed democrat—dedicated to the project of integrating the Metis into Canadian society as political and social equals. As the metis elder Mooshum declares, Riel's conflict was not a "rebellion," as a white character describes it, but "an issue of rights" (32, 33). Mooshum explains to the priest that Riel didn't seek freedom from the Canadian government, but wanted the "political respect" to be included in it. As Mooshum explains, Riel's project was ultimately foiled by the inertial racism of the state:

> Getting their rights recognized when they had already proved the land—the Michifs and the whites. And [the Cree leader] old Poundmaker. They wanted the government to do something. That's all. And the government pissed about this

way and that so old Riel says, 'We'll do it for you!' Ha! Ha! Howah! 'We'll do it for you!' (33)

As Mooshum describes it, Riel's political project was about getting the state to fulfill its democratic mandate (an historical view largely confirmed by Riel's own documented optimism about the liberative potential of truly representative democracy). The real roots of the conflict between Riel and Canada, Mooshum suggests, has everything to do with the Canadian government's racist determination to exclude the Metis and Cree from the democratic process. Riel's execution at the hands of the Canadian government proved to be the definitive rejection of his inclusive vision for the Metis, Indian and White inhabitants of Canada to be, as Shamengwa mournfully describes, a "whole people. Not Broken" (33).

At the same time, we must recognize that the form which racism takes in the modern state does not have the same genocidal force as it did in Riel's time. Instead, it is like Cordelia's: ambiguous, unstable and operating in a largely unconscious manner. The form that racism takes in the modern state is not the genocidal desire to actively oppress or destroy Indians. Rather, it is the assumption of white privilege—the idea that white culture and economic privilege represents a norm of that other races fail to conform to, instead of a set of historical contingencies based on the oppression of others. Indeed, due to the deeply entrenched ideological interpolation of class and race in the U.S., any upward mobility on the part of the Indian subject is conditioned on the rejection of Indianess as such. When Indians become successful, so the logic goes, they cease to be Indians and start being white.

This understanding of Euroamerican racism in the modern era can give us insight into the abuses committed against Indians in the name of social welfare. The history of state intervention in the lives of Indians—in the form of boarding schools, forced agriculture, allotment, etc.—has largely been one in which the desire to improve the material lives of Indians was inextricably linked with enforcing racist expectations of cultural behavior. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the U.S. state tied access to material welfare (food, clothing, education) to the proper performance of cultural or religious actions that reinforced the position of white supremacy. The result was a system where upward mobility was achievable to Indians only through direct exposure to, and limited acceptance of, White supremacist norms.

Richard Nixon made many of these same observations about the vexed nature of the relationship between the state and federal government when he made his historic address on Indian Affairs to congress on July 8th, 1970. Nixon declared that the history of the federal relationship to Indian tribes had "oscillated between two equally harsh and unacceptable extremes," paternalism and termination. Where advocates of paternalism wished to use federal services as a tool meant to divorce native people from their communities and their cultures, those in favor of termination sought to eliminate the federal benefits altogether—seeing Indians as already deracinated. The only corrective to this state of affairs was "to break decisively with the past" and usher in "a new era in which the Indian future is determined by Indian acts and Indian decisions." Nixon's solution was "to strengthen the Indian's sense of autonomy without threatening his sense of community" by delinking the positive benefits of state institutions from the racist drive to deracinate Indians:

> We must assure the Indian that he can assume control of his own life without being separated involuntary from the tribal group. And we must make it clear that Indians can become independent of Federal control without being cut off from Federal concern and Federal support.[27]

Nixon proposed that such a task could only effectively be accomplished by allowing Indians to administer the institutions of state welfare that directly affected them, contracting with tribal nations as state institutions who would oversee the dispersal of federal funds in the way they saw fit. The success of any such a policy, however, required a class of Indians with a strong sense of the social, economic and cultural needs of their communities as well as the technical and legal knowledge necessary to assume a control of complex bureaucratic systems. In short, effective Indian self-determination requires Indians like Antone Coutts.

Coutts' role as a tribal judge illustrates how Ojibwe self-government allows for state resources to be directed toward the Ojibwe in a way that strengthens their cultural values instead of degrading them, using another upward mobility narrative in which Coutts becomes the benefactor to a young Ojibwe man. Corwin Peace is a troubled youth that some consider as having "no redeeming value whatsoever" (197). Coutts resignedly tells the reader that he takes a particular interest in Corwin because "it seemed [Coutts] was fated from the beginning to witness the full down-arcing shape of [Corwin's] life's

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27 Nixon, Richard. "Special Message on Indian Affairs." *Documents of United States Indian Policy*. ed. Francis Paul Prucha. University of Nebraska Press. 2000. pp. 256-8.

trajectory" (198). Surely enough, Corwin comes under Coutts' jurisdiction when he is arrested for tying up his elderly uncle and stealing his priceless violin. In deciding what to do with Corwin, Coutts informs the reader:

> I have a great deal of latitude in sentencing. In spite of my conviction that he was probably incorrigible, I was intrigued by Corwin's unusual treatment of the instrument. I could not help thinking of his ancestors, the Peace brothers, Henri and Lafayette. Perhaps there was a dormant talent. And perhaps as they had saved my grandfather, I was meant to rescue their descendant. These sort of implications are simply part of tribal justice. I decided to take advantage of my prerogative to use tribally based traditions in sentencing and to set precedent. Then I sentenced Corwin to apprentice himself with the old master. . . . He would learn to play the violin, or he would do time. (209)

This passage shows how the operations of the state fundamentally change when an Ojibwe is able to direct them. The judgment Coutts renders onto Corwin understands him as one part of a complex system of mutual obligation and social history (indicative of a deeply Ojibwe worldview, as I shall discuss later on)—instead of a mere criminal in need of discipline. Instead of inflicting upon Corwin a jail sentence that would remove him from his community and is network of social obligations, Coutts uses his legal "prerogative" to enmesh Corwin more deeply in it.

What is important in this passage is how it illustrates Coutts' ability not only to redirect the state's resources in a way that reflects Ojibwe values, but also his ability to

communicate those values back to the state. Coutts is not just "tak[ing] advantage" of his "prerogative to use tribally based traditions in sentencing," he also "set[s] precedent," giving Ojibwe traditions the force of recognized juridical value. In so doing, he challenges the entrenched cultural assumptions of white privilege by showing that an Ojibwe value system has enough intellectual coherency to form the basis of a functioning, modern society. Recalling the Robert Burton quote Coutts gives early on the novel, "He who goes to law holds a wolf by the ear," we see how Coutts has used the law to hold the ear of the state (114). Coutts ability to do this work requires his understanding of both sets of cultural traditions, along with a willingness to find value and commonalities between them—not a rejection of one set for another. Erdrich makes her point clear: the political and economic successes of self-determination cannot be maintained under the conditions of cultural separatism. In order to make the state responsive to Ojibwe cultural values, those values must be shared with the outside world—challenged, defended, translated.[28]

Ultimately, Coutts and Cordelia's story acts as sort of allegory for the history of Indians and the U.S. state—a history in which the potential for a true collaborative partnership between equals is foundered by mundane prejudice on the part of the state. The solution, *Plague of Doves* suggests, is the potential for continued self-determination to break down the corrosive ideology of white supremacy within the state by challenging Euroamerican cultural assumptions—a process, we must recognize, she herself is

28 In many ways Coutts acts as what Anishinabi legal theorist Dale Turner calls (borrowing a phrase from Vizenor) a Word Warrior—an indigenous person who can translate "indigenous philosophies" effectively into "the legal and political discourses of the state" (72). For more on Turner's thoughts on the role of the Word Warrior, see his volume on the subject *This is not a Peace Pipe: Towards a Critical Indigenous Philosophy,* University of Toronto Press, 2006.

engaged in. By giving Euroamericans access to representations of a modern Ojibwe nation being successfully guided by indigenous values, the novel engenders in its readers the political will to promote the continuing project of self-determination and the undermining of white privilege.

At the same time, *Doves* suggests that Ojibwe self-determination—like the entrenched white privilege it is meant to challenge—is a project rooted in historical contingency. Observing the course of the reservation decades after his rise to political authority, Coutts observes that the reservation has become a place of "slight stability and even occasional prosperity" (91). Due to the decision by the tribe to "switch our economic base away from farming" by taking advantage of "government . . . tax incentives for businesses to locate here," the reservation thrives—thanks in no small part to the Ojibwe's ability to control the resources of the state. Meanwhile, Pluto and the other non-Native farming communities that surround them are beginning to "empty out and die," unable to access the same federal programs that shield the reservation from the vicissitudes of capitalism (91). Coutts makes clear that the Ojibwe feel little remorse at the passing of their non-Native neighbors, seeing their plight as long-delayed just deserts:

> It's a shame to see them go, but Geraldine and I agreed that we were not about to waste our sympathies. In the winter of our great starvation, when scores of our people were consumed by hunger, citizens of Argus sold their grain and raffled off a grand piano. More recently, when we traveled to Washington to fight a policy that would have terminated our relationship with the United States

> Government guaranteed by treaty, only one lawyer, from Pluto, stood up for us. That was my father. (92)

Yet, Erdrich forces the reader to question whether the desire on the part of Coutts and Geraldine to see Pluto's downward economic spiral is a betrayal of their own cultural values. As Coutts reflects on the death of Pluto, his mind wanders, considering the implications of his own historical and social responsibilities:

> As I look at the town now, dwindling without grace, I think how strange that lives were lost in its formation. It is the same with all desperate enterprises that involve boundaries we place on the earth. By drawing a line and defending it, we seem to think we have mastered something. What? The earth swallows and absorbs even those who manage to form a country, a reservation. (Yet there is something to the love and knowledge of the land and its relationship to dreams—that's what the old people had. That's why as a tribe we exist to the present.) It is my job to maintain the sovereignty of tribal law on tribal land, but even as I do so, I think of my grandfather's phrase for the land disease, town fever, and how he nearly died of greed, its main symptom. (115)

The ambivalence of this passage is telling. In Coutts' political imagination, the sovereignty of the Ojibwe is not transhistorical fact, but a necessary construction meant to protect Ojibwe values—encoded as the relationship between the land and dreams. Even as Coutts recognizes the importance establishing legal protections for the Ojibwe,

he is concerned at a set of differing legal regimes that allows his community to thrive while Pluto dies of economic starvation. The boundaries that separate the reservation from the rest of the area recapitulate the same assumptions of essential difference that were initially held by Coutts' white, land speculator grandfather, before he learned to value the land as the Ojibwe did. Erdrich wonders—as should we—if the Ojibwe bear any responsibility to change the conditions for non-Natives to reflect the positive gains they have gained. In essence, Erdrich asks if the state shouldn't bear the same amount of responsibility for each of its citizens as it does for the Ojibwe.

We live because we live

The political project of Erdrich's work is not, however, limited to changing the perceptions of her Euroamerican readership. The advent of the self-determination era, while a remarkable step forward for the relationship between the U.S. and Natives, could not make the reality of the state's history of abuse disappear. The project of showing the state's capability to reflect and even promote Ojibwe values requires Erdrich to convince her Ojibwe readership that the state—despite its historical abuses—can be trusted. Doing so means working against nearly two centuries of traumatic experiences of inadequate annuities, abusive boarding schools, and armed aggression. Moreover, it means overcoming a set of deeply rooted philosophical assumptions about the incommensurability of Indian and Euroamerican values and cultural practices. To show the state's value to Indians, Erdrich must show that self-determination has made the state not only capable of benefitting the Ojibwe people, but also consistent with their historical traditions.

Erdrich's most explicitly positive representation of such state institutions comes in her 2005 novel, *The Painted Drum*—specifically, a section of the novel entitled "The Little Girl Drum." The section begins with a desperate scenario: three young Ojibwe children have been left alone in a remote cabin—without food, electricity, or heat. Erdrich narrates with direct, humorless parataxis:

> They had already scraped every particle of oatmeal from the pot that Mama had left on the stove. They had been hungry the day before, and the day before that too. They had wiped the pot with their fingers. Alice's stomach felt so caved-in she thought maybe it was sticking to the back of her body, and the places that it stuck hurt with stabbing pains. While she was wrapped in the blankets, she had peeled some flecks of paint off the walls and chewed them like candy.[29]

Driven by hunger and desperation, the children's mother, Ira, has left them in order to earn money by soliciting men at a local bar. As a severe blizzard rolls in from the north, the children struggle to stay warm. As a last resort to keep the cold at bay, the eldest child, nine-year-old Shawnee, starts a fire on the floor of their living room that quickly spreads out of control. The children barely escape the fire with their lives, only to be left exposed to the freezing night. Shawnee and her siblings struggle through the blizzard for hours, until finally reaching the safety of their neighbor's house three miles away.

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29 Erdrich, Louise. *The Painted Drum.* New York: HarperCollins. 2005. p. 190. Note: all future citations from *The Painted Drum* will be given in parentheses, e.g. (190).

The bulk of the narrative in "The Little Girl Drum" concerns the children's recovery in an Indian Health Service hospital. As the children receive medical treatment, a warm place to sleep, as well as their first meal in days, it becomes clear to the reader how much their survival is predicated on a functioning welfare state. Indeed, over the course of this short section of the novel, Erdrich mentions a staggering number of tribal and federal programs, including heating assistance, food assistance, scholarship programs, Housing and Urban Development programs, the Veterans Administration, employment services, Indian Child Welfare, and tribal ambulance services. "The Little Girl Drum" makes clear that without a network of functioning welfare services working in tandem, Shawnee and her siblings would never have survived the night.

In its efforts to generate the political will to defend vitally important welfare programs, *The Painted Drum* has to overcome this legacy, convincing readers that the institutions of the state can be trusted. The novel does so not only by making visible the positive benefits of government programs in the lives of Ojibwe people, but by showing how these programs do not necessarily conflict with the values that inform traditional Ojibwe communal identity. In short, "The Little Girl Drum" depicts how the Ojibwe may not only materially benefit from welfare state, but that they may do so without the threat of cultural and political assimilation.

Given the larger theme of rehabilitating the image of state's function in Indian Country, it makes sense that the majority of "The Little Girl Drum" focuses on the work of the Indian Health Service, a much-maligned federal institution. Take, for example, the opening paragraph of Sherman Alexie's *Indian Killer* (1996):

> The sheets are dirty. An Indian Health Service hospital in the late sixties. On this reservation or that reservation. Any reservation, a particular reservation. Antiseptic, cinnamon, and danker odors. Anonymous cries up and down the hallways. Linoleum floors swabbed with gray water. Mop smelling like old sex. Walls painted white a decade earlier, now yellowed and peeling. . . . Twenty beds available, twenty beds occupied. Waiting room where a young Indian man sits on a couch and holds his head in his hands. Nurses' lounge, two doctor's offices, and a scorched coffee pot. . . . Donated newspapers and magazines stacked in bundles, months and years out of date, missing pages. In one of the examining rooms, an Indian family of four, mother, father, son, daughter, all coughing blood quietly into handkerchiefs. [30]

In Alexie's deliriously imaginative introduction, the IHS hospital literally becomes a front in a war the U.S. Government still wages with Indians—a place where Indian babies are kidnapped after delivery and loaded into military helicopters that "strafe the reservation with explosive shells."[31] While this literal representation of the IHS as a front in a campaign of genocide is obviously hyperbolic, it has an understandable emotional plausability.

Founded in 1955 as the only federally-funded health-care provider for civilians in the U.S., the IHS has come under repeated criticism for its outdated facilities, inept employees, and rationed care. Despite acting as the primary source of medical services

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30 Alexie, Sherman. *Indian Killer.* New York: Atlantic Monthly Press. 1996. pp. 3-4.

31 Ibid. p. 6.

for many tribal people, especially those in remote reservation communities, the IHS has been chronically underfunded for its entire existence. As late as 2009, the average yearly expenditure by the IHS on Indian healthcare was only slightly more than half that spent on healthcare for inmates of federal prisons, per capita.[32] Stories of waiting for long periods in IHS waiting rooms only to be misdiagnosed or mistreated by inexperienced or indifferent doctors—or be turned away without seeing any doctor at all—are familiar to many Indians.[33] This negative reputation has become so entrenched that even the woman responsible for the oversight of the IHS, Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius, has publicly described the Service as an "historic failure."[34]

Even more damning are the accusations of the IHS's involvement in human rights abuses against Native women and children. In 1972, a physician and activist named Constance Redbird Pinkerton-Uri brought public attention to the case of a Native woman who had been sterilized by IHS doctors without full understanding of the consequences of the procedure. A subsequent investigation by the Government Accountability Office that found that 3,406 Native women had been sterilized in the four years between 1973 and 1976. A number of these women, the GAO found, were coerced by IHS doctors who had not fully explained the procedure or claimed that the women's welfare services would be withheld if they were not sterilized. The same report also found that Native

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32 Trahant, Mark. "The Indian Health Service Paradox." *Kaiser Health News.* 6 September 2009. <http://www.kaiserhealthnews.org/Columns/2009/September/091709Trahant.aspx>

33 There even exists a Facebook group entitled "I just spent 6 hours at IHS just for them to give me Tylenol," dedicated to sharing stories about negative experiences with the service (Trahant, Mark. "I Just Spent Six Hours at IHS Just for Them to Give Me Tyenol." *Seattle Post Globe.* 8 March 2010. <http://seattlepostglobe.org/2010/03/08/why-facebook-complaints-about-the-indian-health-service-are-important/>).

34 Jalonick, Mary Clare. "AP Interview: Sebelius to Boost Indian Health Care." *The Seattle Times.* 16 June 2009. <http://seattletimes.com/html/politics/2009344224_apussebeliusindianhealthcare.html>

children enrolled in boarding schools had been used as research subjects in clinical tests, carried out by IHS clinicians, without the consent of their parents.[35] This incident, in addition to the Service's many other failings, has led some to characterize the IHS's treatment of Indians as not just ineffective, but genocidal.[36]

However, in "The Little Girl Drum" Erdrich presents, in stark contrast to Alexie, a version of the IHS hospital that is clean, sterile, and safe:

> The nurse tucked the digital thermometer underneath Shawnee's arm and she swam up from her dream to half-wakefulness. She heard the *woosh* of the pump on the blood pressure cuff, and heard it again as the nurse stood over Alice. An hour ago, Shawnee's hands had throbbed and itched, but now that the medicine the nurse had given her had kicked in, she was comfortable. The nurse went out of the room, but Shawnee did not return entirely to sleep. The door was open a crack

35 U.S. Government Accountability Office. *Government Operations: Investigation of Allegations Concerning Indian Health Service.* 4 November 1976. <http://www.gao.gov/products/HRD-77-3>

36 During this period, activists began making startling accusations that the prevalence of sterilization among Indian women was much higher, with some even claiming that at least 40% of Native American women of child-bearing age had already been sterilized by the IHS without their knowledge. Claiming to have conducted a study of sterilization practices, Pinkerton-Uri predicted that 25,000 Indian women would be sterilized in 1975 alone—a number representing significant portion of the population of American Indian women at the time. Despite never publishing the findings of her study, Pinkerton-Uri's claims took hold in the imagination of many Natives and Non-Natives after being aggressively promoted by anti-abortion organizations from the religious right. Some academics continue to cite Pinkerton-Uri's prediction of 25,000 forced sterilizations in 1975 as a historical fact (see, for example, Lawrence, Jane. "Indian Health Service and the Sterilization of Native American Women." *American Indian Quarterly,* Vol. 24, No. 3., p. 410). It is doubtless that the IHS doctors who coerced Native women into sterilization were acting out of an adherence to either explicit or unconscious belief in white supremacy, but there is no evidence that a massive sterilization campaign was the official policy of the IHS. Continued fear of forced sterilization subsequently became a commonly stated reason for Natives to actively avoid seeking medical care from the IHS. It is also worth noting that the IHS actually *withheld* reproductive health services from many Native women until the late 60's, largely to avoid being accused of promoting genocide (Grossman, Bergman, Erdrich, et al. "A Political History of the Indian Health Service." *Millbank Quarterly,* Vol. 77, Iss. 4, p. 582).

> and she could hear the nurses talking at their big round station in the middle of the ward. It was comforting talk. … As the room and its safety surrounded her, she was flooded by a startling and almost painful happiness. (247)

As the children's injuries are treated promptly and effectively, the novel presents the IHS as a space where genuine, uncompromised care is the norm, and not the exception. Although the narrator constantly reminds the reader of Ira's utter destitution, the cost of the children's healthcare is not an issue. Indeed, hospital staff provides Ira with extra food, clean clothes and a place to sleep, causing her to feel like "she really lived at the hospital now," a replacement of the home she lost (224). The routine kindness shown toward Ira and her children by anonymous doctors and nurses are not the charitable acts of individuals, but representative of a larger therapeutic institution where care for the less fortunate is the operating norm.

The only member of the hospital staff to be represented as a distinct character is Ira's cousin, Honey, who provides a stark contrast to the institutional benevolence. A nurse at the hospital, Honey attempts to shame Ira for the poor decisions that put her children at risk. Described as "round and cute, and full of satisfaction about her house and children and hard-working husband," Honey visits Ira's children "because they made her feel so much better about her own children and her situation in this life" (239). While the distastefulness of Honey's characterization throws the benignant disinterest of the rest of the anonymous hospital staff into even sharper relief for the reader, Honey's unprofessional manner causes Shawnee to wonder "if Honey went to school or just practiced until she got the job of nurse," (239).

Shawnee's question causes the reader to doubt Honey's fitness as a medical practitioner and the quality of the care that Shawnee is receiving. The moment is telling in its ability to illustrate how a single negative interaction can undermine the credibility of an entire institution. Just as Honey stands out from an otherwise anonymous hospital staff due to her unprofessional manner, stories about IHS dysfunction have the potential to distract one from seeing the larger historical accomplishments of the agency—limiting the political will to defend the Service.

At the time of *The Painted Drum's* publication in 2005, the political will to protect the IHS was indeed at an all-time low. The automatic appropriation measures of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act (IHCIA) had long expired, forcing Congress to reauthorize spending for IHS operations every year. According to a 2004 report from the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, such appropriations had "failed to account for medical inflation rates and increases in population," leading to spending rates far below the national average in health care expenditure.[37] Opposition to the reauthorization of IHCIA was spearheaded by fiscal conservatives—most notably Oklahoma Senator Tom Coburn, who said: "[N]ationwide, Indian health care is the worst."[38] Coburn had blocked previous attempts to reauthorize IHCIA, proposing instead that individual Indians be allowed to buy health insurance on the open market with funds appropriated for the IHS, effectively privatizing the service. Coburn attempted to gain support for his plan by engaging in a

37 Berry, M., et al. "Broken promises: Evaluating the Native American health care system." *US Commission on Civil Rights, Office of the General Counsel* (2004). p. 87.

38 Parker, Kathy. "Coburn Health Care Bill Not a Fix." *The Pryor Times* 2 April 2010. <http://pryordailytimes.com/local/x1612523842/Coburn-Health-care-bill-not-a-fix/print>

public campaign of vilifying the IHS, publicly recounting the graphic details of incidents of Indian patients receiving substandard care:

> Rhonda Sandland couldn't get help for her advanced frostbite until she threatened suicide. Though her hands were purple and she could not dress herself, she could not get an appointment at the Indian health clinic. When she finally got one, the clinic decided to remove five of her fingers. Fortunately, a visiting doctor intervened and gave her drugs instead—saving her fingers.[39]

Coburn argued that incidents like this were the result of a "broken system" that "rations health care services on a 'life or limb' basis" because it is "insulated from any competition."[40]

Despite the program's failings, prominent Native Americans rose to defend the IHS during these debates. In a speech before Congress, Jefferson Keel, then Vice President of the National Congress of the American Indian, testified: "the IHS has been characterized over the past decade as a 'broken' system. The truth is that the IHS system is not so much broken as it is 'starved.'"[41] Shoshone-Bannock journalist Mark Trahant

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39 Coburn, Tom. "Don't Get Sick After June." *Fox News Online.* 5 November 2009. <http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2009/11/05/tom-coburn-public-option-indian-health-service/>

40 "Coburn amendment 4034 empowers tribal members to choose for themselves how they get their health care." 14 Feburary 2008. <http://www.coburn.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?a=Files.Serve&File_id=d9e5a73c-d177-4f42-aa29-932221f0bfd7>

41 Keel, Jefferson. Testimony to the Senate Subcomittee on Indian Affairs. *Hearing on Reforming the Indian Health Care System.* 11 June 2009. <http://www.indian.senate.gov/public/_files/JeffersonKeeltestimony.pdf>

went even further, stating in an editorial that, "with sufficient resources, the Indian Health Service could be the model for reform," due to its investments in "in education, sanitation and preventative care."[42] A recent report on the history of the IHS confirms Trahant's point, finding that the Service had a profound impact on the public health of Native people:

> In the first 25 years of the [IHS] program, infant mortality dropped by 82 percent, the maternal death rate decreased by 89 percent, the mortality rate from tuberculosis diminished by 96 percent, and deaths from diarrhea and dehydration fell by 93 percent. The improvement in Indians' health status outpaced the health gains of other disadvantaged U.S. populations. For example, between 1980 and 1992 infant mortality was nearly halved for Indians, whereas it decreased by 25 percent among African Americans.[43]

The report also found that, while the life expectancy for American Indians in 1955 was a full nine years lower than that of the general population, the difference had been more than halved by 1999. These figures encouraged the coauthors of the report (one of whom was Dr. Angela Erdrich—IHS physician and younger sister of Louise) to conclude that

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42 Trahant, Mark. "The Double Standard of Government-Run Health Care: the Indian Health Service." *News from Indian Country*. July 2009. <http://www.indiancountrynews.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=7030:trahant-the-double-standard-of-government-run-health-care-the-indian-health-service&catid=287&Itemid=108>

43 Grossman, Bergman, Erdrich, et al. "A Political History of the Indian Health Service." *Millbank Quarterly,* Vol. 77, Iss. 4, p. 573.

the IHS is one of the "few bright spots . . . in the shared history of the American Indians and the federal government."[44]

However compelling the statistics may be, they do little to counteract the emotional impact of anecdotes of botched care, long lines and mistreatment. The resulting imbalance makes the failures of the IHS highly visible while its successes remain obscure. *The Painted Drum,* by simply presenting an IHS experience in which nothing goes wrong, in which Indian children are actually saved from a life-threatening situation with effective medical treatment, counteracts this perception and makes a powerful political statement about the importance of the IHS. Although it would be absurd to think that Erdrich's novel had any real impact on the congressional debates, the scene from *The Painted Drum* is representative of the experiences of Natives who argued passionately and persuasively for the eventual reauthorization of IHCIA in 2009.

The novel is particularly valuable in its ability to show that acceptance of governmental programs such as the IHS—already so dearly paid for with massive land cessations—need not cost the Ojibwe their identity as a people. *The Painted Drum* allows the reader to put aside perceptions of the state's constant Foucaultian threat of totalizing assimilation by showing how the welfare state, when operated by Ojibwe in positions of authority, can reflect the same values that inform traditional Ojibwe communal identity. In so doing, the novel makes the argument that Ojibwe identity is produced by relationships of mutual obligation in a community rather than the mere maintenance of cultural practices by individuals.

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44 Ibid. p. 571.

The events of "The Little Girl Drum" can be compared to a well-known dibaajimowin from the Ojibwe oral tradition. Recorded multiple times by ethnographers and Ojibwe writers, the dibaajimowin tells the story of a father and his young son, who is set to embark on a vision fast to entreat the manidoog (spirits) for aid and power. His father, like many an ambitious parent, wishes his son to achieve greatness in life, pressuring him to fast for far longer than normal—twelve days, in most versions. The father believes that by fasting for such a long period, his son will draw the pity of powerful manidoog who will give him spiritual gifts that will allow him to become a great warrior. After nine days of fasting in the forest, the father goes to check on his son. The starving boy begs his father to give him food. The father refuses, leaving his son for another three days. When he returns, the father finds his son has painted his chest bright red and is preparing himself as if to die. The boy tells his father that the manidoog have indeed taken pity on him and will give him great power. Before his father's eyes the boy is transformed into a robin that flies away into the forest, singing its distinctive song.

The popularity of this short allegorical story may be due to the way it resonates with some of the philosophical beliefs of traditional Ojibwe culture. The ideal of mino-bimaadiziwin—translated roughly as 'the good way of living' (in its verb form mino-bimaadizi, 'living well')—historically held central importance among the historical Ojibwe. At the core of the belief was the promotion of living itself as the highest attainable virtue. Because life for the historical Ojibwe was often lived on the razor's edge of subsistence, mino-bimaadizi was difficult, if not impossible, to do by oneself. As Ojibwe historian Cary Miller observes, "The only way to ensure mino-bimaadiziwin in all seasons was through establishing relationships of interdependency as widely as

possible, including extended family in neighboring communities and manidoog."[45] The way in which one solicited aid from manidoog and human partners was by appealing to their sense of sympathy by becoming pitiable. The most recognizable form of this process of entreaty being the symbolic fasting and exposure required to solicit the manidoog for spiritual aid.

The story's allegorical value comes from showing how the ambitious father had lost sight of the fast's purpose: not to become powerful, but to ask for aid in ensuring a good, long life free of hardship, starvation and disease. In pushing his son to become powerful through performing a feat of individual resilience, the father had forgotten that true power comes from receiving (and giving) help when it is asked for. The father had failed to recognize his own son's pitiable nature the first time he checked on the boy. The father's punishment for this, as Theodore Beaulieu explains in his version of the tale, is to hear the robin's song, "nin-don-wan-chee-gay...nin-don-wan-chee-gay…" translated as "I am warning, or I am alarmed."[46] The father's negligence and pride has left it to the more powerful manidoog to intervene to help the boy by giving him some of their power—albeit in a way the father did not expect. As nineteenth century Ojibwe poet Jane Johnston Schoolcraft writes, the boy in the story did, in fact, receive a great blessing from the manidoog. By becoming a robin the boy experiences freedom "from the cares and pains of human life," because all of his needs would be "spontaneously furnished by the

45 Miller, Cary. *Ogimaag: Anishinaabeg Leadership, 1760-1845*. U of Nebraska Press, 2010. p. 25.

46 Beaulieu, Theodore. "Boyhood and Manhood-The Legend of the Robin." *The Progress.* White Earth, Minnesota. 24 December 1887. p. 1.

mountains and fields."[47] By allowing the boy to meet his subsistence needs more easily, they had given him the gift of mino-bimaadizi.[48]

A robin also features prominently in *The Painted Drum.* Ira's youngest child—a young boy who nearly dies from a pneumonia-induced seizure—is named Apitchi, Ojibwe for 'robin.' However, when Apitchi is brought to the edge of death, it is not the manidoog that intervene to save him, but the IHS doctors and nurses:

> They kept working on him, calling for things [Ira] didn't know the names of. Nobody noticed her. He couldn't be dead, she thought, as long as there was so much activity. She fixed on the bustling of the nurses. The low key, businesslike voices of the doctors reassured her. If the doctors were giving orders there was hope. (241)

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47 Schoolcraft, Henry Roe. *Algic Researches.* New York: Harper & Brothers. 1839. p. 225. Note: the version of the robin story that appears in *Algic Researches* is nearly identical to one published under Jane Johnston Schoolcraft's pen-name in the journal *Muzzeniegun.*

48 As Cary Miller explains:

> In the Ojibwe world the clearest demonstration of power was lack of dependence for food, safety, health, and material goods. Hence the manidoog had more power than humans, as they could exist independently of humans with little difficulty. In contrast, humans were exceedingly dependent on them to the point of being "in constant need of help from birth to death."6 Ojibwe oral tradition instructs that survival is such a precarious and dangerous business that only with the aid of spiritual power given by manidoog could the individual expect to achieve a long and successful life. Every Ojibwe tale mentions some use of supernatural power, suggesting that Ojibwe peoples considered relationships with manidoog and the blessings and gifts that flowed from them to be a regular part of everyday experience.' Such help was perceived as so essential that no performance of any task, whether in the service of subsistence, war, peace, or even love, was interpreted as due to an individual's own abilities or efforts. (Miller, *Ogimaag.* p. 23.)

Unlike the father in the dibaajimowin, Ira does not lose her son (the doctors want to spirit him away in a helicopter, but the blizzard keeps them from doing so). Yet, like the father of the original robin, Ira is forced to overcome her insistence on individualism and open herself to mutual obligation in order to achieve a better life—free from hunger and poverty. This didactic process is facilitated by agents of the state, who help Ira to recognize the ways in which her beliefs keep her from attaining a better life for herself and her children.

Early on in the "The Little Girl Drum," Ira reveals a set of deep-seated (and potentially misguided) assumptions about Ojibwe identity that shape her understanding of community, family, and the state. At the beginning of the chapter, when the man Ira is attempting to solicit, John String, suggests that she may need "spiritual help," Ira is offended at the very mention of ceremony in a bar, saying: "You can be either a drunk or a spiritual person. Not both if you're an Indian. I'm sorry. That's the way it is" (202). When John asks Ira who came up with such a definition, she retorts: "Oh come on . . . the Shawnee Prophet. You ever heard of the Shawnee Prophet? That's who said" (202). Invoking the memory of Tenskwatawa,[49] Ira reveals a complex moral system in which

49 Tenskwatawa, or the Shawnee Prophet (1775-1836), founded a charismatic religious movement that would allow his brother, Tecumseh, to politically unite the various tribes of the Great Lakes region in common purpose during the first decade of the 19th century. In 1812, Tecumseh would draw this new religious coalition into war with the United States as allies of the British. Tenskwatawa's teachings, like those of Popé and other Native revitalizationist charismatics, were highly moralistic. Whites, so Tenskwatawa argued, were sent to earth by an evil spirit in order to punish Indian sinfulness. In order to return to the good graces of the Great Spirit, and thereby rid themselves of the colonial demons, Tenskwatawa's followers had to radically change their behavior—changes almost entirely aimed at ridding Native life of any shred of Euroamerican influence. Some of these changes, like the prohibition of alcohol, no doubt were addressing the very real negative consequences of Euroamerican colonialism, yet Tenskwatawa's injunctions went beyond intoxicants. Tenskwatawa's followers exhorted to abandon the use of any Euroamerican technologies, including metal utensils, manufactured cloth, flint and steel, and domestic animals (even, ironically, dogs), and explicitly banned from intermarrying with whites.

Although he is still sometimes praised by some Ojibwe as a hero of decolonization, Tenskwatawa's teachings were fundamentally similar to the archetypically 'American' ideals of self-

personal responsibility, religious belief, and Ojibwe identity are made synonymous with one another. Like the Shawnee Prophet, Ira believes that being Ojibwe means that one either follows a strict code of traditional behavior or risks lapsing into a state of sin. The moral implications of either side of the binary are clear. For Ira, the only good Indian is a traditional one—and Ira does not see herself as a good Indian.

That does not mean, however, that Ira has not tried. Indeed, it seems that up until the point at which the narrative begins, Ira had attempted to adhere to a traditional Ojibwe lifestyle as closely as she could manage—taking up residence in her late father's cabin, far away from the rest of the reservation community. As one character suggests, Ira's decision to live in the cabin has to do with her desire to be, like her father, a "true-life bush Indian" (211). Ira herself remembers her father as a self-sufficient traditionalist who rejected modern living, fondly recalling him building his rustic cabin "by hand" (201) and stubbornly supporting himself by hunting and trapping, even though "there

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reliance and providence at the heart of Manifest Destiny, and proved just as disruptive in the daily lives of the Ojibwe in the 19th century. The adopted captive John Tanner (1780-1847) recorded his community's enthusiastic conversion and eventual rejection of the Shawnee Prophet's religion in his memoir. When one of Tenskwatawa's followers made an attempt to proselytize to him, Tanner casually rejected the new religion—with his characteristically terse pragmatism—on the grounds that "our dogs were useful in aiding us to hunt and take animals, so that I could not believe the Great Spirit had any wish to take them from us." However, the prophet's teachings gained an audience among the majority of Ojibwe in his community, and soon even the skeptical Tanner threw away his flint and steel in order to conform to the new beliefs. Tanner reports that the loss of technologies that the Ojibwe had already been using for generations "subjected many of the Indians to much inconvenience and suffering," so many abandoned the burgeoning religious movement. Tanner observes that Tenskwatawa's teachings ultimately failed "to unite [the Ojibwe] in the accomplishment of any human purpose," and only added more hindrances to their already precarious life. By the time he wrote his memoir in 1830, Tanner reports that the Ojibwe's opinion of the Shawnee Prophet had become damningly dismissive:

> For two or three years drunkenness was much less frequent than formerly, war was less thought of, and the entire aspect of affairs among [the Ojibwe] was changed by the influence of one man. But gradually the impression was obliterated, medicine bags, flints, and steels, were resumed, dogs were raised, women and children were beaten as before, and the Shawnee prophet was despised. At this day he is looked upon by the Indians as an imposter and a bad man.

Tanner, John. *The Falcon: A Narrative of the Captivity and Adventures of John Tanner.* London: Penguin Classics. 2003. pp. 144-7.

wasn't a living in it" (211). Not only is Ira's characterization of her father false (we later learn that Ira's father actually supported himself with a veteran's pension) it also reflects an incoherent ideology that sets the traditional and the modern in an opposition with one another.

While the performance of traditional subsistence activities may do the symbolic work of rejecting modernity, it cannot do the practical work of expressing and maintaining communal ties when in isolation from other social components. After her father's death, Ira tries to support her family through beading—a high-skill occupation that resonates with historically traditional Ojibwe women's labor—but can't sell her work due to the remoteness of her cabin. Ira chooses not to live closer to town in one of the reservation's tribally funded prefabricated homes, saying that where others might be contented with a "cheap miracle," she is "looking for something else" (201). Ira's characterization of the tribe's HUD housing as both low quality (cheap) and unearned (a miracle), betrays her condemnatory attitude concerning her tribal community's inauthenticity. Yet, it is her insistence on living in a way that conforms to an idealized tradition that necessitates her living away from the modern (and therefore debased) tribal community, the potential consumers of her beading. Traditional practices such as hunting, trapping and beading are valued because they historically ensured the welfare of the tribe, either materially or economically.[50] Ira eventually recognizes this, admitting, "If I moved into town, I guess I could do pretty well" (211).

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50 Erdrich makes this clear in *The Painted Drum* with the character of Kit Tatro, a white wannabe who performs all of the symbolic actions of tradition—hunting, trapping, living outdoors—but remains a figure of deluded buffoonery. Erdrich makes it clear in this context that Tatro's traditional activities, in the absence of community, are almost meaningless. What defines tribal identity more than traditional behavior is the network of shared obligations to the community that those traditions encode. To this end, even Tatro

Ira's insistence on moral and material autonomy is, in a sense, the opposite of traditional Ojibwe values. Ira believes that when she drinks, she is making a choice "not to be spiritual" (that is, not to be morally righteous), and therefore deserves to be punished for her lack of faith (202). An internalized a feeling of personal failure in the face of colonialism, one can argue, is the very source of the intergenerational trauma that runs throughout *The Painted Drum.* Anaquot's brutal sacrifice of her own daughter in order to save herself, the elder Shawaano's drinking and abusive treatment of Bernard and his siblings, even Elsie Traver's willingness to turn a blind eye to her husband's sadistic treatment of his own children—each is compelled by a sense of powerlessness and personal failure in the face of a history massive dispossession. For Erdrich, resisting this sense of self betrayal is the only way in which the Ojibwe can continue to exist as a people.

The key to such an endeavor, for Erdrich, lies in the concept of mino-bimaadiziwin. Erdrich speaks to the importance of mino-bimaadizi in *The Painted Drum,* in what might be considered one of her most clearly didactic statements about the proper response of the Ojibwe to colonial trauma. Erdrich presents this philosophical rumination in a symbolic form that allows it to be recognized as an extension of traditional Ojibwe cultural practices: a dibaajimowin, a story meant to instruct, told by Ira's father to Bernard Shawaano. Many years earlier, despondent in the face of the suffering that surrounded him, Ira's father contemplates suicide. Heading out onto a frozen lake, where he knows a group of wolves congregates, he waits for them to attack and kill him. After

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eventually comes to understand that belonging to a tribe is more about who takes care of you, rather than what you do—when he claims affiliation with the Ho-Chunk after a group of Winnebago RVs prevent him from getting into a car accident.

several days, a curious wolf approaches, but does not immediately attack him. Taking his chance to fulfill his curiosity, Ira's father asks the wolf—who is clearly a powerful manidoo:

> Wolf…your people are hunted from the air and poisoned from the earth and killed on sight and you are outbred and stuffed in cages and almost wiped out. How is it that you go on living with such sorrow? How do you go on without turning around and destroying yourselves, as so many of us Anishinaabeg have done under similar circumstances?

The wolf answers, simply, "We live because we live." Considering the wolf's response Ira's father explains:

> The wolves accept the life they are given. They do not look around them and wish for a different life, or shorten their lives resenting humans, or even fear them more than is appropriate. They are efficient. They deal with what they encounter and then go on. Minute by minute. One day to the next. (120-1)

In the wolf's statement, we see a reflection of the mino-bimaadiziwin ideal presented as a practical politics that can maintain social stability even in the face of massive social disruption. As Ojibwe scholar Scott Richard Lyons explains, "For *Anishinaabeg,* what we now call culture was always geared toward the production of *more life*, not political

theology."[51] As such, the concept of mino-bimaadiziwin offered very little in the way of explicit moral injunctions or set practices. The complete reliance on temporal and spiritual assistance to achieve mino-bimaadizi made it a shared goal in the community instead of the result of personal responsibility. When disaster, in the form of famine, disease, or other difficulty, presented itself, it was due to the failure of this network of reciprocal aid, not due to the failure of individuals to live up to codified moral behaviors.

Not only is Ira's insistence on a self-sufficient system of morality at odds with the concept of mino-bimaadiziwin, it is completely at odds with the welfare state's 'no fault' philosophy, in which the causes of poverty, substance abuse, criminality and other social ills lie in the larger processes of historical dispossession and economic exploitation. Because in her mind no one can be responsible for her poverty but herself, Ira rejects aid—to the point where she chooses prostitution before pity. In order for Ira to improve the material conditions of her and her children's lives, she must open herself to the networks of mutual obligation that form the core of both mino-bimaadizi and the welfare state. Before the conditions of her upward mobility can be created, Ira must be made to change the way she conceptualizes personal responsibility—she must be made to want the help she and her family need.

Essential to this process is Ira's acceptance that the events that nearly claimed the lives of her children were not her fault—despite her choice to leave her children alone. She must learn, in the words of one character, "Some mistakes had bigger outcomes than they deserved" (248). As Bruce Robbins, a theorist of welfare-state literature, argues,

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51 Lyons, Scott Richard. *X-Marks: Native Signatures of Assent.* Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press. 2010. p. 90.

"[I]t does not seem haphazard that, giving such prominence to limited liability, the upward mobility story should place this rejection of individual responsibility at its decisive turning point."[52] This lesson is a vital one to the project of presenting the welfare state in a positive light, as it reveals the basic assumption at the heart of all welfare projects: that sometimes circumstances are so far beyond the control of the individual that society as a whole must bear some responsibility in alleviating their effects.

In order to accept the kind of aid that will benefit herself and her children, Ira must reimagine herself as a deserving recipient of it. This work is primarily done through the character of Seraphine String, the Indian Child Welfare Officer who interviews Ira to determine whether she is fit to care for her children—as well as the wife of the man Ira had earlier attempted (almost successfully) to solicit for sex. The reader experiences Ira's interrogation by String as a moment of incredible tension, in which Ira worries that String will use her institutional power to take away Ira's family for threatening the stability of her own.

Ira's anxiety—as well as our own as readers—has an understandable intellectual genealogy. The figure of the Indian Child Welfare Officer, like the IHS hospital, is one that has not fared well in Native American literature or the public imagination. Novels such as Joseph Bruchac's *Skeleton Man* (2001) and Barbara Kingsolver's *Pigs in Heaven* (1993), along with Erdrich's own early short story "American Horse" (1983), present the figure of the child welfare officer as ill-informed at best and outright hostile to the

52 Robbins, *Upward Mobility*. p. 89.

concept of Native motherhood at worst.[53] In each case, the figure of the Welfare Officer is presented as a kind of state-sponsored kidnapper, almost always conceptually linked to Indian boarding schools—a figure who can only threaten Native cultural identity with grim, totalizing bureaucracy.

When String finally appears, she is decidedly not the cold, calculating stereotype of the Welfare worker. Instead, String is presented as warm, caring and "quietly matter of fact" (225). We discover that String is not only a representative of the Indian Child Welfare Service, but a well-respected traditional healer and religious leader in her Ojibwe community. Adding to the already complicated picture we are given of String, it is revealed that she is also a survivor of an Indian boarding school—even bearing a scar where a matron used an upholstery needle to rip apart her lips for speaking the Ojibwe language. Erdrich gives subtle hints that String's experience as a recipient of abuse at the hands of institutional authority is a motivating factor in her own work as an agent of the welfare state. As String contemplates placing Ira's children in a foster home, she absentmindedly "touche[s] the scar on her lips," unconsciously reminded of the trauma of being taken from her own parents (227). Ultimately, Erdrich's characterization of String forces the reader to trust her judgment, to see her not as a bureaucratic interloper, but an culturally informed, considerate and knowledgeable expert.

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53 Erdrich's own early effort is the worst offender here. Her representation of the villainous Vicki Koob in "American Horse" borders on caricature. Koob is presented as a vindictive, small-minded bureaucrat with no knowledge of the Ojibwe, who wishes only to salvage (Richard Pratt-style) Indian children from their families. Interestingly, Erdrich's short story—along with Kingsolver's and Bruhac's—were all published and set long after the passage of the Indian Child Welfare Act in 1976, which ostensibly protected Native children from being easily taken away from their families and communities.

String's position as a religious leader for her community makes her even more threatening to Ira, as she is capable of rendering judgment not only about Ira's fitness as a mother, but as an Ojibwe. Ira fears that String will take her children from her as well as "act all spiritual" and publicly shame her from her position of cultural authority (226).[54] Ira is surprised when String does not ask about her flirtatious interaction with her husband at the bar. Ira expects to be punished—for her transgression against String, for neglecting her children, for not being a properly spiritual person—but String refuses to do so. Instead, String decides that Ira may keep her children, but only if she can find a place for them to stay, forcing Ira into a position to accept aid from the other members of her community.

As a result of this brief, but tense, interaction, Ira's insistence on personal responsibility begins to crumble. String's lack of hostility knocks Ira off guard, sending her into an apoplexy of defensive self-consciousness:

> The red cotton placket-front blouse she was wearing, the too large bra, the baggy black pants, and the hospital slippers made her feel poor and beggarly. But I am poor and beggarly, she thought. Everything I have is burnt. She remembered

54 The image of Ira's confrontation with String in an IHS hospital offers an interesting inversion of a trope so prevalent in contemporary Native American literature that it has almost ossified into generic convention. This trope can be seen in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*, Louis Owen's *Sharpest Sight*, Linda Hogan's *Power*, Joseph Boyd's *Three Day Road,* and—in some respects—in Erdrich's earlier novel *The Bingo Palace*, to name but a few. In each of these novels, the troubled protagonist, alienated by modernity, can only find the cultural tools to reintegrate into her/his tribal society by fleeing to a remote place and becoming self-sufficient. This is often accomplished through apprenticing under a traditional elder who lives alone and forces the protagonist to give up the trappings of modern life and assume aspects of a historically traditional lifestyle. This apprenticeship both heals the psychic wounds of the protagonist and allows him/her to bring traditional values back to a fragmented tribal community that has lost sight of what it means to be truly Indian. (Incidentally, at least three of these novels, *Ceremony, Power* and *Three Day Road,* represent the hospital as a space of compromising, dangerous social control over Indian bodies.)

> Shawnee's school pictures. Her breath caught. And now this woman is going to ask me if I had sex to get the money. But I can honestly tell her that I did not, though I would have, but would have doesn't matter. (226)

The confusion and contradiction of Ira's internal monologue reveals that her prior assumptions are beginning to break down and be remade. Ira imagines herself as a mother willing to do anything for her children, but String, as both a representative of the government and the Ojibwe community, reminds her of the myriad of social services and community resources that Ira never thought of reaching out to for help. String's presence forces Ira to honestly confront the desperation of her situation, to see being 'poor and beggarly' not as the sign of personal failure, but in the positive sense (foundational to mino-bimaadiziwin) of being open to spiritual and material aid.

This process ultimately comes to fruition when, shocked into consciousness by Apitchi's brush with death, Ira realizes that her decision to leave her children at home and go to the bar may have been less of a selfless act than she had been telling herself. As she looks down on her son recovering in the hospital bed, Ira thinks to herself:

> I don't know. And I don't know either about myself as a mother. No good, maybe. I know I love them. I know I give up things for them. I don't have men. I don't have lots of things. But why did I go in that bar on this one night of all fucking nights instead of going home? How did all of this get set into motion? Was it the oatmeal? The last pan of fucking slop? How come I didn't walk to Bernard's then, and borrow some food and catch a ride in and out with a trustworthy person? Was

> it because I never thought of it, or was it because I wanted—just for a moment, or one night, just an evening, really—to get away from the kids? (252-3)

Galvanized, Ira finally reaches out for help, asking her neighbor Bernard Shaawano (who happens to be a janitor at the IHS hospital), if she and her children can live at his house. Bernard, an elder who had once been close friends with Ira's father, not only gladly offers to share his home, but his extensive knowledge of Ojibwe culture and history as well, promising to "teach Shawnee everything he could" (251). "The Little Girl Drum" ends with Bernard preparing to conduct a healing ceremony for Apitchi, while outside the reservation digs itself out from under the blizzard:

> It was that disorienting day that always occurs after a storm….All routine is shot to hell, yet everything that needs to run, does run. The roads are not yet plowed out. Houses are covered. Or the ashes of houses. Snow blankets the whole reservation.…And yet, you will see that the roads that matter, the ones most necessary, are cleared between people. Just one lane at first. The plows push away the snow with a cheerful energy. By the end of the day there will again be a pattern of trails. (253)

Just as the snow plows carve paths that connect the people of the reservation, so to have Ira and her family been reintegrated into to the Ojibwe community by Seraphine String, the IHS doctors, and Bernard Shaawano—each (like the snow plows themselves) agents of the state.

The Era of Contraction

It would be easy for an unsympathetic reader to dismiss the idea of seeing the welfare state as ethically consistent with Ojibwe values as a way of rationalizing 'domestic dependent sovereignty' and its supposedly assimilationist ends. Allow me to be clear, my reading of *The Painted Drum* does not suggest that the U.S. state deserves absolute support from Indians, or that there is no value in resisting federal intervention in Indian Country, or even that the operations of the welfare state are always and invariably beneficial. The simple observation of history shows the absurdity of such a position. However, the treaties made between Indian tribes and the federal government, for better or worse, guarantee that the state bears a huge amount of responsibility—greater than it has historically had for almost any other class of citizens—to insure the health, education and welfare of tribal peoples. The value in Erdrich's work is in showing that continuing this relationship—already so dearly paid for—need not cost the Ojibwe their identity as a people, as a nation. That they can, in fact, use the resources offered them by the state to better shape their lives into a better reflection of their values.

This recognition is needed now more than ever as new economic and political developments have seriously put those resources in jeopardy. On November 1st, 2011, the journalist Mark Trahant (Shoshone-Bannock) stood before hundreds of tribal government leaders at the annual conference of the National Congress of the American Indian and announced that the era of self-determination was over. Indian nations now faced what Trahant called the "Era of Contraction." According to Trahant, the series of economic crises that has gripped the world in last years of the aughts had fundamentally changed the relationship between the U.S. and tribal nations. Arguing that the policies that most

threatened tribal sovereignty (allotment, removal, termination) came during times of economic instability and government contraction, Trahant argued that current efforts on the part of the U.S. and state governments to bring their budgets under control would have a disastrous effect on the prosperity and political rights of tribal nations. While acknowledging that specific cuts to programs directly benefiting Indians had yet to be made, Trahant pointed out that much the federal money that comes into Indian Country actually comes from national-level welfare initiatives—like Medicaid and Medicare, social security, and food assistance programs—that are major targets of proposed austerity measures. The picture Trahant painted for the future of tribal people was gloomy:

> [T]he policy of contraction puts Indian Country at risk of a total economic collapse. It's as if policy makers want to see how bad things can get on reservations and in native communities where the economy is already bleak. The policy recipe being advocated is to significantly reduce government funding; reduce or eliminate the only good paying jobs available, and hope for the best. In the larger economy the mantra is that the private sector will pick up the pieces. But that is total fiction in remote Alaska villages or on Indian reservations because there is no significant private sector. The vast majority of jobs are government, either tribal or federal.[55]

55 Trahant, Mark. "Tribes Deal with Another Brutal Federal Policy." *Indianz.com*. 1 Nov. 2011. <http://www.indianz.com/News/2011/003563.asp>

While paying lip service to the recognition of tribe's ability to manage their own resources, a new philosophy of economic contraction would seriously undermine the stability and efficacy of tribal governments by simply taking almost all of their resources away.

While it is too soon to know whether the full impact of Trahant's prediction comes to pass, his observation works to show us the value of Erdrich's work. By making Euroamericans recognize the ways in which they have a stake in the continuity of Ojibwe life—with their votes, their tax dollars, their political support—Erdrich offers a powerful counter to the apathy and ignorance that marks most Euroamericans' perceptions of federal Indian policy. At the same time, her work to show how state welfare can offer both material benefits without threatening their sincerest held cultural values, Erdrich works to break down anti-statist mistrust and galvanize the Ojibwe to fight for access and the ability to control the state resources that affect nearly aspect of their lives. It is vital to realize that both projects requires a dialogic negotiation between Natives and non-Natives in which their cultural values can be compared, evaluated, contested, reformulated.

We, as literary critics, have missed an opportunity to examine and reveal what Native writers have to say about the federal Indian policy or the project of everyday tribal governance—effective methods of negotiating cultural difference, the trials of conveying Native cultural values in a way to make them apprehendable to non-Natives, the ability to know when to compromise and when to push back. I worry that the critical articulation of Native nationalism as a desire for separatism alienates our work from those who do the day-to-day work of governing Native nations, as well as the policy makers who still hold so much power over Native life. Are we to say that Native American literature has

nothing to say to all of the tribal leaders, national-level policy advocates, and directors of non-profits who work to strengthen the relationship between Native nations and the federal government for the benefit of Indian people? Are we to say Native literature has nothing to say to members of congress, bureaucrats at the DOI, or non-Native voters but 'Leave us alone'?

If we are to take seriously the future of Indian nations, I certainly hope we do not.

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